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A POETICS OF CLAUDE SINON'S NOVELS

FROM LA ROUTE DES FLANDRES TO LEÇON DE CHOSES

by

MICHAEL EVANS

Thesis for the degree of Ph.D. in the  
UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Department of French  
September 1978

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Summary.

This thesis examines Claude Simon's later novels in the light of four concepts which form part of the discourse of a poetics of modern fictional writing. The study is split into four parts, each of which is introduced by a short theoretical section.

Part I, "Frame", analyzes the subversion of narrative framework in La Route des Blandres, Le Palace, and Histoire, with particular reference to phenomena such as "dédoublement" of narratorial identity, unexplained spatio-temporal shifts, and "éclats de narration". Borrowed from the Russian Formalists, the concept of "frame" deals with the problem of "point of view". The discussion shows that the three novels possess no stable "point fixe" from which an ordered reading can be constructed. Far from ignoring this "deficiency", Simon's novels are shown to be constantly highlighting it and underlining problems of perspective in general.

Part II, "Intertextuality", discusses the function of the intertextual fragments in la Bataille de Pharsale. The analysis follows on from the one in the previous section in that these fragments are seen to undermine the narrative framework. A new type of "intertextual reading" is also sketched, based on the special triptych relationship between this novel, la Jalousie and A la recherche du temps perdu.

Part III, "Materiality", takes a close look at Jean Ricardou's "materialist criticism" and concentrates on an analytic description of the process of reading a modern fictional text such as Les Corps conducteurs. The concept of "isotopy" is seen to be useful in discerning certain textual phenomena such as "description blocks" and instances of "descriptive confusion".

Part IV, "Self-Reflexivity", examines the important role played by metatextual and fictional "mises en abyme" in the contradictory pattern of intersequential conflict in Triptyque and Leçon de choses.

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Declaration.

This thesis has been written in collaboration with no-one.

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Introduction.

Tzvetan Todorov has summarized the aim of poetics in the following way:

l'objet de la poétique n'est pas l'ensemble  
des faits empiriques (les oeuvres littéraires)  
mais une structure abstraite (la littérature). 1

This definition of poetics as a study of "literarity" or "abstract structure" which is common to all works of fiction may appear to reveal a contradiction in the title and methodology of the present thesis. How can one attribute the name "poetics" to a study which is devoted almost entirely to the close analysis of part of the work of a single author? This apparent contradiction is also present in Todorov's Littérature et signification which, though conceived as a "poetics", analyzes only one novel, Les Liaisons dangereuses. However, as the critic explains, the book does not focus on Laclos's novel but on literary discourse : that is, poetics itself:

La poétique ne peut se passer de la littérature  
pour discuter de son propre discours; et en même  
temps ce n'est que dans un dépassement de l'oeuvre  
concrète qu'elle y parvient. 2

Poetics, according to the critic, is not to be equated with the activity of description which paraphrases literature, but is to be construed as a science, analyzing and transforming the theoretical premises upon which it operates. Although Todorov is careful to distinguish and even to oppose description and science, the two are often confused. Literary critics often embark on an "exhaustive description" of a literary text in the name of a "scientific poetics".

The current thesis, which presents itself as a poetics of Claude Simon's later novels, responds favourably to Todorov's call for a poetics as a theoretically self-reflexive form of textual analysis. Firstly, as a "poetics" the thesis does not set itself the task of explaining or

exhaustively describing the novels. It is in order to avoid considerations of Simon's work as a unified "oeuvre" that the author's earlier works are not discussed. Secondly, Simon's novels themselves discourage any descriptive reading. This is not to say that his novels are about literature or art in general in the way that, for example, some of Thomas Mann's or André Gide's novels are. It is not a matter of thematic content but of perspective. It is not so much what one reads in Simon's novels but the act of reading them which reflects the nature of reading fiction in general.

What is reading? For Jonathan Culler, the answer is any of the following synonyms: recuperation, naturalization, motivation, or "vraisemblabilisation":

whatever one calls the process, it is one of the basic activities of the mind. One can, it seems, make anything signify. If a computer were programmed to produce random sequences of English sentences we could make sense of the texts it produced by imagining a variety of functions and contexts. If all else failed, we could read a sequence of words with no apparent order as signifying absurdity or chaos and then, by giving it an allegorical relation to the world, taking it as a statement about the incoherence and absurdity of our own languages. As the example of Beckett shows, we can always make the meaningless meaningful by production of an appropriate context. And usually our contexts need not be so extreme. Much of Robbe-Grillet can be recuperated if we read it as the musings or speech of a pathological narrator, and that framework gives critics a hold so that they can go on to discuss the implications of the particular pathology in question.

Culler's definition of reading is a limited one. Not all texts, surely, invite "naturalistic" readings. The reference to Beckett's work is unconvincing in this context. Is the critic saying that Beckett's work is about making the meaningless meaningful, or is he claiming that it is "meaningless" at the outset and could only be made "meaningful" if the reader set it in an "appropriate context"? Surely, of the two

possibilities only the first resists outright rejection. But if this is so, the example of Beckett's work is not very useful since no recuperation would be needed if the message is directly expressed on the thematic level of the text. In the case of Robbe-Grillet's work, the critic asserts that "much", but not all, of the novels can be read as the "musings" of a psychopath. What about the rest? Moreover, such a reading would be incorrect since Robbe-Grillet's novels centre around a play on the haphazard system of interpretations in pathological or psychological criticism. Once again, it seems necessary to distinguish between thematic and textual readings. The third and most fundamental objection to Culler's assessment deals with the problem of the amount of freedom a reader enjoys with regard to a given text. Is there always total freedom? If it is always possible to make sense out of "non-sense", does the reverse also hold? Can one "de-naturalize" David Copperfield? Can all conventional novels be read as modern texts? George Eliot's Middlemarch and James Joyce's Finnegans Wake, surely, differ decisively in the approaches which they elicit from their readers. This difference is produced by the compositional aspect of the novels in question. Each novel influences its reader by the way it is written. This holds true even in the case of the modern "plural" text, as Claude Simon has admitted:

it is possible to have five, ten, twenty different and justified interpretations of one text, but there are obviously not one thousand, and there can be some that are purely and simply wrong.<sup>4</sup>

The view of reading as a totally subjective and impressionistic activity must therefore be rejected.

Just as the process of "vraisemblabilisation" is not "natural" since other forms of reading exist and, in certain cases, are more appropriate,



so too "realism" is not to be taken as the "natural" perspective of all art. Quoting Stephen Heath, Claude Simon defines realism in the following way:

The image that a given society at a given moment  
in history has and wants others to have of itself. 5

The appropriateness of analyzing Claude Simon's work within the context of poetics can be confirmed in two main ways. Firstly, the desire at the heart of all compositional poetics to outline homologies between different cultural disciplines can be particularly fulfilled in a critical analysis of Simon's novels.<sup>6</sup> Claude Simon's early ambition to be a painter has ~~strongly~~ influenced his writing, and our thesis examines the close compositional relationship between his novels and works from the visual arts such as paintings, photographs, and films. Secondly, just as poetics refuses to embark on an exhaustive description of a given literary text but is ultimately intent on a self-reflexive examination of its theoretical framework, so too Claude Simon's work (despite certain phenomenological readings of the "nouveau roman" as a "pure description" of objects or reality<sup>7</sup>) does not claim to be a mirror of the external world but self-consciously explores the theoretical framework of fictional writing. The modern writer's ability to transgress the barrier separating theory from practice has been neatly outlined in Jean Ricardou's definition of the term "scripteur" which is now often used (in preference to the term "auteur") with reference to a writer like Simon:

l'auteur est celui qui se dispose en tant que praticien, comme le complément du professeur en tant que théoricien. Avec le concept de scripteur, c'est cette parcellisation qui s'éclatine. Si le scripteur est un produit de son produit, c'est parce que sa pratique suscite de la théorie, et

cette théorie une nouvelle pratique. loin de s'opposer dans un face à face irréductible, pratique et théorie sont les deux phases nécessaires du procès de production.

Claude Simon has not only taken part in critical discussion through various essays, interviews, and participation in conferences but has pointed to his novels as contributing to the development of literary theory. Defending himself against accusations of writing novels which are tailored to fit the theoretical writings of Jean Ricardou, Simon has referred to his fictional work as the source of some new critical concepts which have since secured an important place in modern literary discourse:

C'est par exemple après la bataille de Pharsale qu'il a élaboré sa théorie des générateurs. Pour ma part (et je l'ai dit aussi à Cerisy), je reprends tout à fait à mon compte le schéma par lequel il montre le chevauchement constant, l'entendement constant et réciproque de la théorie par la pratique et de la pratique par la théorie, avec cette seule différence que je remplacerai ce dernier mot par réflexion.

We can see from the above that Simon appreciates the contribution which his own work has made to the development of the concept of "générateur". The main argument in the present study is that there are four more fundamental concepts which are not only vital to an appreciation of Simon's later novels but which are also transformed and developed by them. Although the four concepts (frame, intertextuality, materiality, and self-reflexivity) are treated separately and each is discussed in a separate part of the thesis, analysing different novels in each case, they are all to be seen as being closely inter-related. All four notions play an important part in outlining the special, new type of "textual reading" which can be seen as an alternative to the "recuperative" activity mentioned by Culler, and which is elicited by

Simon's later novels. For this reason too, the novels leading up to and including L'Herbe are not examined in detail, for it is only with la Route des Flandres that Simon's work finally and decisively breaks with the conventional novel and requires a new type of approach from the reader. The four concepts, therefore, form part of a poetics of a modern text, in which the processes of reading and writing are no longer "compartmentalized" into two separate functions of "production" and "consumption". Instead, the act of reading will be shown to be a crucial factor in the production of textual signification. As Ricardou has noted,

tous les montages ne sont pas actualisés par  
le texte. C'est la lecture qui peut les  
provoquer et qui prolonge ainsi le texte.  
Telle littérature exige une lecture, loin de  
toute consommation passive, une lecture qui  
agit, qui écrit. 10

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PART I

FRAME

## Chapter One

### What is "Frame"?

Poetics is indebted to Iouri Lotman and Boris Uspensky for formulating the key notion of "frame" in art and literary criticism. Following in the footsteps of these two critics, Erving Goffman has applied the concept to analysis of social behaviour. Frame, therefore, is not a concept which is restricted to literature or even to art in general. It is an abstract notion which refers to a particular feature underlying all forms of "organization" (to use Goffman's term) or "composition" (to use Uspensky's). What precisely is this feature? In order to arrive at a clear definition of "frame" one may begin by considering the literal use of the word, as in "picture frame". For Lotman, the frame of a painting is the border-line separating the content of a painting ("texte") from everything surrounding it ("non-texte").<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the spectator is never conscious of the one while contemplating the other. The frame of a painting thus acts as a demarcation-line denying the spectator a simultaneous view of exterior and interior. But this border-line can still have the same function and efficacy without physically existing:

Ainsi, par exemple, dans le théâtre du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle les fauteuils des spectateurs les plus privilégiés étaient placés sur la scène, de sorte que les spectateurs assis dans la salle voyaient sur la scène à la fois des spectateurs et des acteurs. Mais il n'entrait dans l'espace artistique de la pièce, situé à l'intérieur d'un cadre le limitant, que les acteurs, c'est pourquoi le spectateur voyait des spectateurs sur la scène, mais ne les remarquait pas.<sup>2</sup>

We may call this aspect of frame its "syntactic function" since it marks the point of contiguity between a "text" and its surroundings. The function is similar to the use of brackets in a sentence.

There is also, however, a "semantic function" operated by, for

instance, the frame of a painting. According to Lotman the content of a work of art is at once specific and universal. For example, Anna Karenina describes the life of a particular woman, as well as being about all men and women. The first level of the novel may be called "representational" (Lotman's word is "fabuleux") and the second "expressive" ("mythologique").<sup>3</sup> In terms of visual art, the distinction can be expressed in the following two sentences describing the same painting: "This is a painting of a nude"; "This is a painting about jealousy". The role of frame is to provoke such comments: in other words, frame manufactures the representational and expressive qualities of a given object. Thus, a poster showing a can of soup beside other posters on the wall of an underground station is merely an advertisement for soup, whereas a "hyper-realist" painting of a Campbell's soup can by Andy Warhol hanging amongst other paintings in an art gallery elicits a different type of response from the observer. Firstly, the latter spends more time examining the visual aspect of the painting (the use of colour and shape) although this may be exactly the same as in the advertisement hastily glimpsed in the tube station. Secondly, the spectator feels inclined to interpret the painting as a comment on art or the consumer society or whatever. Similarly, a mere collection of a few bricks in a room full of modern sculptures becomes a work of art with representational and expressive potential, while the same arrangement of bricks outside the museum is just a collection of bricks. The "semantic function" of frame is characterized in the following extract from Kafka's Journal quoted by Robbe-Grillet at the 1971 Cerisy colloquium:

Personne ne songerait à monter sur une scène  
devant un vaste public pour simplement casser  
des noix, mais si quelqu'un le faisait, c'est

qu'il y aurait quelque chose derrière. 4

So far we have only been considering what may be called "external" or "outer frame" which both Lotman and Uspensky situate in the same spatial context as that of the observer and not in the "three-dimensional space represented in the painting".<sup>5</sup> In other words, while the spectator is contemplating the content of a painting he is not conscious of its outer frame.

We can now turn our attention to what may be called "internal frame" which can take at least three different forms. Firstly, there is a literal reproduction of frame within frame, as in the numerous paintings containing mirrors, windows, or paintings. If the content of the miniature frame is a repetition of the content of the outer frame, as in Van Eyck's "Portrait of the Arnolfinis"<sup>6</sup> then one can speak of "mise en abyme". More often, however, the content is different, as in Velazquez's "Les Méninas" where the mirror reflects the king and queen standing outside the space reflected in the painting. Equally, a painting can contain several different miniature frames depicting totally unrelated scenes, each with a different angle of perspective. Boris Uspensky notes that in medieval Russian icons "frame is created by the shift from the internal point of view, which structures the central part of the representation, to the external point of view, which structures the periphery".<sup>7</sup> The centre of the painting, therefore, is structured from the point of view of an internal viewer, and the periphery of the painting is structured from the point of view of an external viewer:

This shift may be realized in a picture in the alternation between forms in the central part, represented in inverse perspective, which is manifested by concave forms, and forms on the periphery, represented in "sharply converging" low eye level perspective, which is manifested

by convex forms.<sup>8</sup>

As an example of a combination of the two points of view, Uspensky cites the typical representation of a building in medieval painting where

the interior is represented in the centre of the picture, and the exterior is represented on the periphery. We can simultaneously see both the internal walls of a room, for example (in the main part of the painting), and the roof of the house to which this room belongs (in the upper part of the representation).<sup>9</sup>

Finally, a third type of internal frame in painting, also based on the principle of alternation, is the juxtaposition of different styles:

For example, in painting, a flat decorative background (represented in linear perspective) contrasting with three-dimensional figures in the central part gives the effect of live actors in front of a painted scenery. Note also the frequently used opposition of laconic gestures and frontality of representation in the foreground of a painting, and sharp foreshortening and baroque elements in the representation of the background figures, the "extras".<sup>10</sup>

The examples cited by Uspensky, such as Antonello da Messina's "St. Sebastian" (1478), are ones where this type of internal frame is used to create a sense of foreground and background in painting where a difference in style separates the focal three-dimensional foreground of the painting from its "purely decorative" background.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, we have noted that, with regard to painting, the notion of "frame" can be divided into two types, external and internal; and that the latter, in turn, is composed of at least three variants: frame within frame, frame produced by alternation of perspective, and frame produced by alternation of styles. External frame, we saw, has both a syntactic and a semantic function. Internal frame possesses a syntactic function which in all its variants is the same as the one



attached to external frame except for the fact that the spatial contiguity outlined in the former is not between text and non-text, but between the content of the inner frame (micro-text) and the content of the outer frame (macro-text). The semantic function of the variants of internal frame differ, however, although in each case the function is as active as the one in external frame. An exhaustive account of the semantic function of internal frame, listing all the different interpretations, would be too long a digression within the context of the present thesis. It is sufficient for our purposes, to establish that there does exist a semantic function: in other words, that internal frame does contribute to the meaning of a given painting. Firstly, frame within frame, as well as focussing on the content of the miniature, draws our attention to the presence of frame itself which, as we noted earlier, is not the case with external frame. Now the observer can contemplate the content and its frame simultaneously. One of the significant aspects of this is to stress the fictionality or "artificiality" of the work, reminding the onlooker that what he is gazing at is a painting which has been structured and fabricated from a particular perspective selected from countless others. Secondly, the semantic function of frame as alternation of perspective produces, as we saw, alternation of internal and external points of view. Thirdly, frame as alternation of style produces, as referred to earlier, a hierarchical evaluation of the scene depicted, by foregrounding and backgrounding the different figures contained therein. Thus the different manifestations of internal frame in painting are not merely decorative adjuncts of the main representation but have a specific rôle in influencing the interpretation of the work as a whole. Figure 1 presents a summary of the different types of frame which we have so far outlined.

Figure 1

| Frame                         | Syntactic function  | Semantic function   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| External                      | denotes the contiguous relation between content of painting and context | 1. representational<br>2. expressive                              |
| Internal                      |   |   |
| 1. Frame within frame         | denotes the contiguous relation between micro-text and macro-text       | focuses on artificiality of the whole work                        |
| 2. Alternation of perspective | "   | produces alternation between internal and external points of view |
| 3. Alternation of style       | "   | produces foregrounding and backgrounding of figures               |

What are the literary equivalents of the different variants of frame which we have so far outlined? One should bear in mind before proceeding that the structure of a painting and that of a work of fiction may be similar but are certainly not identical, and therefore one should guard against looking for identical manifestations of frame. Both Lotman<sup>12</sup> and Uspensky<sup>13</sup> have pointed to the beginnings and endings of novels as equivalents of external frame in painting. One could, by extension, cite the example of the seventeenth and eighteenth century European novel where prefaces and postscripts were frequently used either as authentication of the new genre or for ironical purposes. Another example of this form of external frame, mentioned by Uspensky, is the "traditional formula" ending the Russian folk tale, where the "first person pronoun, the "I", appears here rather suddenly, even though no narrator has taken part in the action until this moment".<sup>14</sup> A converse example would be the anonymous narrator who disappears after the first few pages of Madame Bovary.

However, are these really satisfactory examples of external frame? The external frame of a painting, we saw, is located in the "real world" and not in the imaginary three-dimensional world of the representation. Can we say the same about the prologues and epilogues of the early novel, let alone the first person narrator who appears within the main text itself at the beginning or end? The answer surely must be in the negative since it is clear, for example, that the "editor" in Adolphe is a fictional character and that the "Avis de l'éditeur" at the beginning and the "Lettre à l'éditeur" and "Réponse" at the end of the novel are intimately linked with the thematic and compositional structure of the central narrative.<sup>15</sup> An equivalent of pictorial external frame would have to be the front cover of a book, an introduction or notes by a "real" editor. Clearly, however, a novel does not have to be bound, typed, introduced or annotated in order to be recognized as a novel. On the other hand, examples of internal frame proliferate in literature and play an important role in influencing the interpretation of a given work of fiction. An equivalent of frame within frame is, obviously, the story within a story<sup>16</sup> or, in drama, the play within a play. An example of "mise en abyme" (where the micro-text reflects the macro-text) is, as has often been pointed out,<sup>17</sup> "The Murder of Gonzago" in Hamlet. Fictional frames within frame which are not "mises en abyme" take the form of inset narratives such as the picaresque and pastoral tales contained ("emboîtés")<sup>18</sup> in Don Quixote. One should add that novels are capable of creating more variants of frame within frame than paintings. Thus many novels contain different framings of the same event or series of events: most of the chapters in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying, and Claude Simon's Le Tricheur and Le Sacre du

Printemps are narrated by a different person in each case. The different chapters of As I Lay Dying, for instance, are narrated by the different members of the family taking part in the funeral. The chapters of Le Sacre du Printemps are narrated either by Bernard or by his step-father. Thus, the same content is set in different frames. A variant of this form of frame within frame can be found in Brasillach's Les Sept Couleurs where each of the seven chapters, covering the same series of events, is written in a different form: "récit", "lettres", "journal", "réflexions", "dialogue", "documents", "discours".

Uspensky notes <sup>19</sup> that an equivalent of frame as alternation of perspective is the alternation between the descriptions made from the point of view of one of the characters and descriptions made from an external, "objective" or authorial viewpoint. Flaubert's technique of "style indirect libre" may be said to have played on this feature of internal frame, often confusing the reader as to whether a particular comment is made by one of the characters or by the "narrator". <sup>20</sup> Finally, frame as alternation of style is manifest, according to Uspensky, in the depiction of the characters. Similar to the figures in the background of a painting, the "extras" or "puppets" in a fictional work contrast with the rounded main characters. The critic presents the difference between the description of the boarders and the description of the protagonist in Kafka's The Metamorphosis (where the former are no more than symbolic, cardboard figures) as an example of foregrounding and backgrounding in literature. <sup>21</sup>

Having argued for the value of the concept of "frame" in a compositional analysis of paintings and novels, and having mapped out certain equivalent manifestations of frame in both forms of art, we

can now proceed to outline the specific relevance of the concept with regard to the structure of a modern text, and particularly to the novels of Claude Simon. The nineteenth century novel has been described as being obsessed with establishing a fixed frame; of arranging its component elements within a certain irreversible and hierarchical order of foreground and background. Robbe-Grillet notes that description in, for example, the Balzacian novel is often used to provide a frame or backcloth to the main action:

Et il est certain que ces descriptions-là ont pour but de faire voir et qu'elles y réussissent. Il s'agissait alors le plus souvent de planter un décor, de définir le cadre de l'action, de présenter l'apparence physique de ses protagonistes. [...] Le lecteur trop pressé de connaître l'histoire pouvait même se croire autorisé à sauter les descriptions: il ne s'agissait que d'un cadre, qui se trouvait d'ailleurs avoir un sens identique à celui du tableau qu'il allait contenir. 22

Butor similarly stresses the visual aspect of description as frame in Balzac's novels where the narrator is merely an eye observing and noting all the objects and details which constitute the décor:

Plantant son chevalet ou sa caméra dans un des points de l'espace évoqué, le romancier retrouvera tous les problèmes de cadrage, de composition, et de perspective que rencontre le peintre. 23

Clearly, the notion of "frame" holds a different significance for the modern novelist. As Robbe-Grillet says, description in the "nouveau roman" is not subordinate to plot:

Evidemment, lorsque ce même lecteur passe les descriptions, dans nos livres, il risque fort de se retrouver, ayant tourné toutes les pages l'une après l'autre d'un index rapide, à la fin du volume dont le contenu lui aurait entièrement échappé; croyant avoir eu affaire jusqu'alors au seul cadre, il en serait encore à chercher le tableau. 24

The concept of "frame" is relevant to an analysis of the frequent appearance of what might be called "frame transgression" or, to use Goffman's term, "frame breaks"<sup>25</sup> in the "nouveaux romans" and especially in Simon's novels. Far from being intent on constructing a hierarchical order of semantic and syntactic signification, Simon's novels are continually searching for ways of breaking down conventional barriers and opening up new areas of fictional composition. Examples of frame breaks abound in painting. Paolo Ucello's "The Virgin and Infant" (1445 (?)) shows the child attempting to step out of the painting with both feet on the painted frame at the bottom of the representation. Uspensky has interpreted such illustrations of frame break, which are very common in medieval art, as a desire "to achieve the greatest degree of verisimilitude":

Efforts to violate the borders of the artistic space, generally speaking, seem to be motivated by an understandable desire to bring together, as closely as possible, the represented world and the real world, in order to achieve the greatest degree of verisimilitude - of realism - in the representation. Attempts to break down the frame are many: the removal of the curtain in contemporary theatre; the many cases in pictorial art where the representation extends beyond the frame; and the overcoming of the borders of the artistic space and the joining of life and art, as expressed in the motif of the living portrait (a motif which is characteristic of the work of Wilde and Gogol)." <sup>26</sup>

The critic's literary examples are not entirely satisfactory within the context of a discussion of perspective in painting and literature. The fact that the living portrait is a motif in the works of Wilde and Gogol implies that the element of frame break exists solely on the level of theme or ideas in those works. Are there no literary examples where frame breaks are literally enacted? The second point arising from Uspensky's analysis is related to the first. Is

the critic's "realist" interpretation of medieval pictorial frame breaks applicable to works of modern art, such as the paintings of Magritte and Delvaux or the engravings of M.C. Escher? For instance, Delvaux's "La Fenêtre" (1936) shows a window opening internally onto a landscape inside the room. A similar example is Magritte's "L'Eloge de la dialectique" (1937) which depicts a window opening inwards and revealing the façade of the building contained inside the room. Both paintings focus on an exchange of interior and exterior of frame. An equivalent example in literature would be Unamuno's Niebla where the main character at the end of the novel is so frustrated by the endless run of misfortune in his life that he goes to Salamanca with the intention of confronting his creator, Unamuno, before committing suicide. Once again we find a focus on the play between two frames: the world of the fiction and the world of "reality" with an element from one, in this case the protagonist, migrating to the other. A similar literary example is Borges's El brujo postergado. The frame break in this case is not between interior and exterior, but between two fictions: one "realist" and the other "magical" or "fantastic". An ambitious dean visits a magician, don Illán, in order to learn the art of magic. While leafing through the books in the magician's cabinet, the dean receives news of the imminent death of his uncle which sets off a series of ecclesiastical promotions for him, culminating in his election as pope. But as the dean continually refuses to repay don Illán for his help, the tale ends with a return to the magician's cabinet and the preceding experience is shown to have been a magical test of the extent of the dean's loyalty to don Illán. The tale thus contains two frame contexts with two hinge-points: the arrival of the two men with the uncle's letter, and don Illán's statement "In that case, I shall

have to eat the partridges that I ordered for tonight" <sup>27</sup> which straddles both contexts. Frame breaks thus cross the frontiers separating the "virtuel" from the "réel", as in this story, or separating the interior from the exterior, as in Niebla. As Ricardou says, in his analysis:

Forçant irrécusablement le lecteur à confondre virtuel et réel, le Sorcier ajourné réussit la démonstration scandaleuse par laquelle tous les réalismes sont foudroyés: en la fiction, le réel et le virtuel ont même statut parce qu'ils sont l'un comme l'autre entièrement gérés par les lois de l'écriture qui les instaure. <sup>28</sup>

The novels of Claude Simon do not follow exactly the same lines as those of the examples so far cited which actuate frame shift on the level of plot. An artistic parallel of Simon's frame breaks can be found in Cézanne's "Nature Morte avec l'Amour en Plâtre" (1895) or in Francis Bacon's "Three Studies of Isabel Hawthorne" (1967) <sup>29</sup> where part of the content of one frame spills onto the interior of another frame within the same painting. We shall see, particularly in part three, how this physical enactment of frame break is matched by the use of description in Simon's novels.

Frame as alternation of style has its corollary in the use of collage and pastiche in Simon's novels. But once again, rather than using this alternation as a method of highlighting foreground and background, Simon's novels focus on this form of frame only to transgress it. Thus, La Bataille de Pharsale contains literary as well as non-literary quotations. The novel uses these quotations in order to highlight the different frames in which they are set (this is one effect of the use of italics) and then to transgress these frames by textual association. An extension of this inter-frame activity is, as we shall see, intertextuality where the barriers surrounding each "oeuvre" are transgressed. This form of frame break is prompted by Simon's avowed



dislike of the use of foreground and background in art:

Dans la détaille de Pharsale, j'ai fait allusion à la critique que formule Elie Faure lorsqu'il parle des peintres allemands de la Renaissance auxquels il reproche justement cette absence de valorisation, c'est-à-dire d'accorder une attention aussi passionnée au dessin d'une herbe, d'un caillou ou d'une hallebarde qu'à celui d'un corps en mouvement ou des figures de la Foi ou de l'Espérance.... Et effectivement cette peinture s'oppose de façon radicale à l'invention italienne du clair-obscur (Rembrandt aussi...) où toute la lumière (et l'attention) sont concentrées sur un ou quelques personnages entourés de grands pans d'ombre [...]. Au contraire, dans cette peinture allemande (et Breughel - je pense au "Portement de la croix" ou au "Chemin de Damas" où il faut longuement chercher un Christ ou un saint Paul minuscules, perdus au milieu d'une foule d'autres personnages et d'un immense paysage), l'attention est répartie de façon égale sur la totalité de la surface de la toile: ce n'est plus l'homme centre de l'univers mais l'homme faisant partie de [...]

30

Finally, frame as alternation of perspective (shift of point of view) is also transgressed in Simon's novels. Here, it is the narrative framework itself which is subverted. The alternation of internal and external points of view is replaced by a stress on the undermining of the concept itself of point of view with reference to a work of fiction. Narrative frame breaks or "éclats de narration", discussed in the following chapter, undermine the compartmentalized character of narrative perspective. The distinction between "je" and "il" is exploded by what Philippe Sollers has called "l'écriture percurrente" which he describes as "une approche du sens en train de faire interprétation dans l'écrit":

Voix derrière la voix, intervalles vides martelant la voix, voix ressemblant des voix dans les accents de leurs traces, table rase et cylindre, roue et infini du volume remis à plat, sortie du cadre, de tous les cadres-sequences, iontasmes cadres, frontalement encadrés pour l'écran d'on ne sait quel cinéma. 31

## Chapter Two

### The Framework of La Route des Flandres.

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#### 1. Narrative frame.

The dilemma facing the reader of La Route des Flandres has been succinctly described by Bernard Pingaud:

Ce récit qui ne distingue pas, ne se distingue pas non plus, si l'on peut dire, de lui-même. Il n'est pas vraiment situé. Il n'a pas un foyer, mais plusieurs, et semble amalgamer au moins trois discours différents: un qui serait tenu pendant l'exode, un autre qui daterait de la captivité, un troisième qui se déroulerait après la guerre. D'où l'égarement du lecteur; nous échouons à reconstituer l'histoire, non pas seulement parce que les interprétations y occupent plus de place que les faits, mais aussi parce qu'il n'existe pas de point fixe autour duquel ces perspectives diverses puissent s'ordonner. ]

Most conventional novels influence the reader's interpretation of the material facing him or her. The most common device is the delineation of point of view either through the authoritative presence of a narrator or, as Uspensky shows with regard to War and Peace,<sup>2</sup> through the guiding influence of the framework itself. However, such a "foyer" or "point fixe" from which a perspective or point of view may be discerned is missing in La Route des Flandres. The reader cannot rely on the narrator to help him "reconstitute" an order out of the multiple interpretative possibilities suggested by the text. Acknowledging this "impasse", Pingaud abandons analysis of the novel's narrative structure and turns to its thematic content for the underlying meaning or "vérité particulière qu'elle [l'histoire] doit révéler".<sup>3</sup> The conclusion which the critic reaches, namely that the underlying "vérité" is the theme of time, must leave us unsatisfied. Certainly such a theme does exist in the novel, but for the reader to be able to select it as easily as Pingaud does implies that despite

there being no "foyer" of perspective in the narrative structure, the themes in the novel are ordered in an unambiguous, hierarchical fashion.<sup>4</sup> But is it possible to separate narrative and theme in this way? Surely if the one is riddled with doubt and complexity so too is the other? This chapter will follow a different course to the one taken by Pingaud. Instead of dismissing the narrative structure we will turn our attention fully onto it. In this way we can examine the special consequences arising from the seemingly paradoxical situation in which a lack of narrative "foyer" in the novel is accompanied by a narrator whose presence is thrown into relief in varying degrees of intensity throughout the novel.

In order to examine the subversion of the traditional "points fixes" in the narrative we must turn to an excellent article by Dominique Lanceraux entitled "Modalités de la narration dans La Route des Flandres".<sup>5</sup> The critic traces three moments of "éclat de narration", three moments when the time and place from which the narration seems to be constructed is radically displaced. Thus the novel begins in the first person narrative:

Il tenait une lettre à la main, il leva les yeux  
me regarda puis de nouveau la lettre puis de  
nouveau moi, derrière lui je pouvais voir aller  
et venir passer les taches rouges acajou ocre  
des chevaux qu'on menait à l'abreuvoir, la boue  
était si profonde qu'on enfonçait dedans jusqu'  
aux chevilles mais je me rappelle que pendant la  
nuit il avait brusquement gelé [7] (p.9)

The opening sentence refers to two time spans: the imperfect and preterite tenses refer to events in the past, and the present tense ("je me rappelle") refers to the present moment in which the past is recalled. The present tense, therefore, can be said to form a frame for the narrative, outlining a moment of discourse: the present of the moment of writing would appear to be the same as the time in

which the words " je me rappelle" are spoken. Equally, the spatial context may be taken to be the same. A few pages later, however, the first "éclat de narration" occurs. The narrative has been unfolding a series of disconnected descriptions of moments from the past relating the experiences of Georges, the narrator, at the calamitous battle of La Meuse in 1940, when suddenly there is a break in the writing:

"Ouais!..." fit Plum (maintenant nous étions couchés dans le noir c'est-à-dire imbriqués entassés au point de ne pas pouvoir bouger un bras ou une jambe sans rencontrer ou plutôt sans demander la permission à un autre bras ou à une autre jambe/7 (p.20)

The displacement affects both the temporal and the spatial narrative framing of the opening pages. The "je me rappelle" of the first sentence is now seen to have been spoken by Georges in a moment of the past to Blum when they were "en route" to a P.O.W. camp, having been captured by the Germans. Moreover, the shift creates a vacancy for a new moment and locus of discourse since the train segment is itself narrated in the imperfect tense. What is the narrative frame of the events related which include Georges's discussion with Blum in the train?

The second "éclat de narration", appearing a few pages later, does not provide an answer to the problem posed by the first "éclat", but introduces an additional problem: a shift from first to third person narrative. Georges is recounting to Blum events which took place before his capture by the Germans and, specifically, his first encounter with the dead horse lying on the road:

et ce dut être par là que je le vis pour la première fois, un peu avant ou après l'endroit où nous ~~nous~~ ~~se~~ arrêtas pour boire, le découvrant, le fixant à travers cette sorte de demi-sommeil, cette sorte de vase marron dans laquelle j'étais

pour ainsi dire englué et peut-être parce que nous dûmes faire un détour pour l'éviter, et plutôt le devinant que le voyant: c'est-à-dire (comme tout ce qui jalonnait le bord de la route: les camions, les voitures, les valises, les cadavres) quelque chose d'insolite, d'irréel, d'hybride en ce sens que ce qui avait été un cheval (c'est-à-dire ce qu'on savait, ce qu'on pouvait reconnaître, identifier comme ayant été un cheval) n'était plus à présent qu'un vague tas de ~~membres~~, de cornes, de cuir et de poils collés, aux trois quarts recouvert de boue - Georges se demandant sans exactement se le demander [.] (pp.26-7)

The shift from first to third person narrative results in a split of identity, or "dédoublément". From this point on the text alternates between the two types of narrative. However, unlike the Tolstoyan technique described by Uspensky of movement from "il" to "je" which corresponds to the movement of perspective from outside a character's mind to within it, the alternation cannot be interpreted solely on a psychological level in Simon's novel. The alternation is another example of substitution of narrative frames.

The third "éclat de narration" maintains the third person narrative but introduces a new spatio-temporal frame. Georges is lying next to Corinne on a bed in a hotel, the war having ended, remembering his past experiences:

il ne dormait pas, se tenait parfaitement immobile, et non pas une grange à présent, non pas la lourde et poussiéreuse senteur de foin desséché, de l'été aboli, mais cette impalpable nostalgique et tenace exhalaison du temps lui-même, des années mortes et lui flottant dans les ténèbres, écoutant le silence, la nuit, la paix, l'imperceptible respiration d'une femme à côté de lui et au bout d'un moment il distingua le second rectangle dessiné par la glace de l'armoire reflétant l'obscur lumière de la fenêtre [.] (pp.42-3)

Again, once a spatio-temporal frame is delineated the problem then arises as to how to define the frame or point of discourse in which

that delineation is made. One may argue that the hotel scene is the one fixed point or frame of the whole novel since it reappears towards the end with Corinne leaving Georges, angry with him for his obsession with the past (p.295). However, such an interpretation is implausible, since we discover that Georges has been meeting Corinne in the hotel for three months before their break-up. Do all the instances of the hotel scene take place on the same day or night, or are they dispersed over the three months? It is impossible to tell. Furthermore, is it at all possible to "explain" the narrative structure of this novel along psychological lines? It seems unlikely that such an intricately composed novel is meant to appear as emanating from one character's mind as the spontaneous flow of memory. Conventional novels which do have one fixed frame generally avoid drawing the reader's attention to the fact of narrative perspective or frame.<sup>6</sup> But La Route des Flandres, with its absence of fixed frame, incessantly draws the reader's attention to this feature of its composition. One reason for this, of course, is that by so doing the novel reminds the reader that it is a work of fiction and not a mirror of reality. A second explanation is that the concepts of "narrative" and "narrator" are fundamentally undermined by the text. In order to study this phenomenon more closely we must return to our analysis of the three "éclats de narration".

The long paragraph preceding the first "éclat" contains a description of Georges riding with his captain along a "coupe-gorge". Various civilians, knowing that the soldiers are heading straight for the Germans, call on de Reixach, from the side of the road, to turn back. The speakers of the unreal voices remain unseen, but Georges imagines them carrying their belongings and empty suitcases.

De Reixach is

un peu interdit, incertain, comme si dans  
un salon quelconq'un l'avait brusquement  
choqué sans lui avoir été présenté ou inter-  
rompu au milieu d'une phrase [.] (p.18)

He reacts with calm politeness and disinterest:

pensait sans doute qu'il est brévit de de  
rencontrer toujours partout et en toutes  
circonstances - dans les salons ou la guerre  
- des gens stupides et sans éducation, et cela  
fait - c'est-à-dire remémoré - oubliant l'inter-  
rupteur, l'effaçant cessant de le voir avant  
même d'avoir détourné les yeux [.] (pp.18-9)

Georges goes on to visualize de Reixach's racing society ("Et il me  
semblait y être, voir cela des ombres vives" (p.19)) and the horse-  
like women. It is at this point that Blum interrupts Georges, and the  
narrative frame is broken. One can therefore say that the interruption  
caused by the civilians in the war predicts Blum's interruption of the  
narrative which causes the first "éclat de narration". This parallel  
is further stressed by the term used to denote de Reixach's mental  
response, "remémoré", which echoes Georges's own recollections of the  
event.

The passage we quoted earlier showed that the second "éclat"  
("Georges se demandait sans exactement se le demander" (p.27)) was  
immediately preceded by the description of the dead horse lying in the  
centre of the road. The interruption caused by the civilians on the  
side of the road is here followed by an even more emphatic inter-  
ruption. The passage echoes the earlier one in the reference to  
"tout ce qui jalonnait le bord de la route" and to Georges's difficulty  
in seeing the horse ("plutôt le devinant que le voyant"). But the  
new perspective of circularity recentrates the motif of interruption.  
The riders have to make a detour in order to avoid the horse. The  
interruption again mirrors the "éclat de narration". The circular

De Reixach is

un peu interdit, interdit, comme si dans  
un salon quelqu'un l'avait brusquement  
abordé sans lui avoir été présenté ou inter-  
rompu au milieu d'une phrase [.] (p.18)

He reacts with calm politeness and disinterest:

pensent sans doute qu'il est inviolable de  
recroquer toujours partout et en toutes  
circonstances - dans les salons ou à la guerre  
- des gens stupides et sans éducation, et cela  
fait - c'est-à-dire remémoré - oublie l'inter-  
ruteur, l'effaçant cessant de le voir avant  
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perspective ("il le vit pivoter au-dessous de lui comme s'il avait été posé sur un plateau tournant") reflects the circular logic of the paradoxical phrase in which the "éclat" appears ("Georges se demandant sans exactement se le demander"). Furthermore, as Dominique Lanceraux notes <sup>7</sup>, the horse's semi-immersion in the earth is reflected in Georges's semi-immersion in sleep. This motif of burial is itself a prediction of the eruption of the third person narrative by which Georges is semi-immersed in the text, caught in the subsequent alternation between first and third person narratives.

The third "éclat" is immediately preceded by a description of the soldiers' arrival one night in a village. The passage focusses on the "paysanne" who leads the tired men to a barn where they can sleep. Unlike the dead horse and the civilians in the previous "mises en abyme", the girl is perceived not as an interruption, but as an end in herself:

comme si toute cette interminable chevauchée  
nocturne n'avait eu d'autre raison, d'autre  
but que la découverte à la fin de cette chair  
diaphane modelée dans l'épaisseur de la nuit / (p.41)

The "paysanne" plays a central rôle in the transition between the two interlocutors, Blum and Corinne. Blum's appearance at the first "éclat" transformed the monologue form which the narrative had hitherto seemed to adopt, into a dialogue form. With the third "éclat" a substitution of interlocutors takes place. The dialogue will now be between Georges and Corinne. <sup>8</sup> The description of Blum in the passage we have been examining repeatedly draws the reader's attention to his feminine features:

(il avait enlevé son casque et maintenant son  
étroite figure de fille gerulait plus étroite  
encore entre les oreilles décollées, pas  
beaucoup plus grosse qu'un poing, au-dessus  
du cou de fille sortant du col raide et  
mouillé du manteau comme hors d'une carapace  
souffreteux, triste, féminin, buté) / (p.40)

Blum's effeminate physique is not the only common point between him and the girl.<sup>9</sup> Both are associated with writing or imprinting: Blum's face is "comme une feuille de papier déchirée" (p.40) whilst Georges perceives the girl as

une sorte d'empreinte persistante, irréelle,  
laissée moins sur sa rétine (il l'avait si  
peu, si mal vue) que, pour ainsi dire, en  
lui-même: [...] lumineuse, comme si sa  
peau était elle-même la source de lumière [...] (p.41)

The third "éclat" may be reflected in the "mise en abyme" of the description but it is actually brought about by the polysemic play of the writing. The farm girl is like a symbol of femininity :

sommairement façonnés dans la tendre argile  
deux cuisses un ventre deux seins la ronde  
colonne du cou et au creux des replis comme  
au centre de ces statues primitives au nom  
de bête, de terme d'histoire naturelle -  
moule poulpe pulpe vulve - faisant penser  
à ces organismes marins et carnivores  
aveugles pourvus de lèvres de cils [...] (pp.41-2)

The text later explains the appearance of Corinne at this point by noting the association between her name and "corail" (p.235): the two girls are implicitly associated by the marine imagery. Furthermore, the description of Georges's first meeting with Corinne includes a reference to an aquarium (p.238). The passage evokes the description of the "paysanne":

et elle - c'est-à-dire sa chair - bougeant  
imperceptiblement, c'est-à-dire respirant,  
c'est-à-dire se dilatant et se contractant  
tour à tour comme si l'air pénétrait en  
elle non par sa bouche, ses poumons, mais  
par toute sa peau, comme si elle était  
faite d'une matière semblable à celle des  
éponges, mais d'un grain invisible, se dilatant  
et se contractant, semblables à ces fleurs, ces  
choses marines à mi-chemin entre le végétal  
et l'animal, ces madrépores [...] (p.236)

This example illustrates the manner in which the composition of the whole novel is based on formal associations and not on any linear chronology. Figure 2 summarizes the sequence of the three "éclats

de narration".

Figure 2

| "Eclats<br>de narration" | "Mises en abymes"                            | Motifs   | Narrative<br>perspectives |
|--------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| 1st. "éclat"             | civilians                                    | vocal interruption<br>of "chevauchée"            | Georges/Blum              |
| 2nd. "éclat"             | dead horse<br>(animal héraldique)            | obstructive inter-<br>ruption of<br>"chevauchée" | 3rd. person<br>narrative  |
| 3rd. "éclat"             | peasant woman<br>(symbole de toute<br>femme) | destination of<br>"chevauchée"                   | Georges/<br>Corinne       |

## 2. "Via rupta"

Jean Ricardou has shown how one can re-read the title of Simon's novel in the light of its polyphonic textual activity, as La Route des Flancs.<sup>10</sup> The play on "Flandres" and "flancs" is certainly plausible and relates to the erotic element in the novel which we shall shortly examine. However, it is the connotations of "route" which reflect the novel's narrative structure. The etymological derivation of the word is from the Latin "via rupta" meaning "voie frayée".<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that the French word for "road" thus derives from "rupta" and not "via". What significance does this have in La Route des Flandres ? Firstly, it reflects the uneven ( or anacoluthic ) progression of the narrative, which is underlined by the various "interruptions" noted in the previous section ; secondly, the motif acts as a link between themes in the novel ( war, ancestry, eroticism ) ; thirdly, the motif is a mirror image of the textual play of the writing. We shall now consider the second two points in more detail.

The road along which the riders advance at the start of the novel is

a "coupe-gorge". The connotations of decapitation are re-iterated in the distortions of the emblem of the de Reixach family made by Georges and Blum : "canard sans tête"(p.90), "colombes décapitées" (p.195).

A second thematic link is made between the motifs of "route" and "commerce". The civilians " sur le bord de la route" who interrupt de Reixach and his men carry their useless possessions:

de vagues bagages ( et même pas des bagages :  
des choses, et probablement inutiles : simple-  
ment sans doute pour ne pas errer les mains  
vides, avoir l'impression l'illusion d'emporter  
avec soi, de posséder n'importe quoi pourvu que  
s'y attachât - à l'oreiller éventré au parapluie  
ou à la photographie en couleurs des grands-  
parents - la notion arbitraire de prix, de trésor)  
comme si ce qui comptait c'était de marcher, que  
ce fut dans une direction ou une autre /.../ (p.17)

The puns in "comptait" and "marcher"/"marché" point to an association of motifs which is soon repeated in the description made by Georges's father of his personal conception of life, a description which occurs shortly after the second "éclat de narration":

l'homme ne connaissait que deux moyens de  
s'approprier ce qui appartenait aux autres,  
la guerre et le commerce /.../ ils n'étaient  
jamais l'un comme l'autre que l'expression de  
leur rapacité elle-même la conséquence de  
l'ancestrale terreur de la faim et la mort,  
ce qui faisait que tuer voler piller et vendre  
n'étaient en réalité qu'une seule et même  
chose un simple besoin celui de se rassurer,  
comme des gamins qui sifflent ou chantent  
fort pour se donner courage en traversant une  
forêt la nuit /.../ (p.35)

The pattern of association extends over the whole spread of the narrative. The motif next appears after the third "éclat" where Georges, cut off from his regiment after an ambush, gropes "on all fours" in the middle of a forest. Two elements from the above quotation form hinges of association between the two passages : "rapacité" as a result of "l'ancestrale terreur de la faim et de la mort", and the reference to "des gamins qui sifflent ou chantent fort

pour se donner courage en traversant une forêt la nuit". The latter element appears first:

quand je courus du bouquet d'arbres à une haie je franchis la haie sur le ventre me recevant de l'autre côté sur mes mains restant étendu jusqu'à ce que j'aie réussi à retrouver mon souffle ou ne tirait plus maintenant j'entendais un oiseau chanter des ombres des arbres s'allongeaient devant moi sur le pré je longeai la haie à quatre pailler particulièrement [...] il y avait des coucous dans la forêt d'arbres où j'étais aussi dont je ne savais pas le nom mais surtout des coucous ou peut-être c'était parce que je savais le nom [...] (p.162)

Georges's metamorphosis into an animal ("j'étais un chien" (p.219)), following the example of Apulcius's The Golden Ass (p.198) is one more way in which the narrator is "dédoublé" in the novel. It is also interesting to note that the name of the bird which Georges recognizes is the "coucou", recalling the "cou coupé" element which recurs throughout the text. The second element linking this passage with the earlier one concerning Georges's father centres round the word "récupération" and the equivalence it poses between hunger and death. Georges, in the middle of the forest, is hunger-stricken and eats the remainder of a sausage:

et à un moment j'eus faim et je me rappelai ce bout de saucisson que je trinquais dans la poche de mon manteau je le mangeai sans cesser de marcher je mangeai la peau aussi jusqu'au moignon noué par la ficelle que je jetai puis la forêt cessa bruta pour ainsi dire sur le vide du ciel s'ouvrit sur un étang [...] (p.163)

Various metaphorical connotations layer the text: "faim", through its phonetic repetition of "fin" leads to "bout de saucisson" and consequently to the abrupt end of the forest. "Moué", through its evocation of "nocud" prepares the reader for the sexual significance of "forêt" and "étang" which will be developed later on in the novel. Finally, one may note that the combination of "marcher"/"marché" motif, through the coupling of "faim" and "mort", is transformed into an association of the motifs

"marcher"/"manger". The generative potential of the word "rapacité" is exploited even further in the text. We will locate two such instances. While escaping from the Germans, Georges comes across a disused chicken coop:

puis plus à gauche, jaillissant juste de l'arête  
du dièdre comme d'une fissure entre la terre et  
le mur, il y avait une de ces plantes sauvages :  
une touffe, ou plutôt une corolle de feuilles  
réparties en couronne (comme un jet d'eau retombant),  
déchiquetées, dentelées et hérissées (comme ces  
anciennes armes ou harpons) vert foncé, râpeuses [.] (p.248)

The "faim"/"mort" equivalence is underlined : the "plantes sauvages" are "dentelées" like ancient weapons. The metaphor is supported by the association between "râpeuses" and "rapacité". The second passage associates the sexual element in the novel with the "via rupta" motif which we have been following:

j'essayai de m'imaginer que j'étais un cheval,  
je gisais mort au fond du fossé dévoré par l'effet  
d'une myriade de minuscules mutations en une matière  
insensible alors ce serait l'herbe qui se nourrirait  
de moi ma chair engraisant la terre, et après tout  
il n'y aurait pas grand'chose de changé, sinon que  
je serais simplement de l'autre côté d'un miroir où  
(de cet autre côté) les choses continuaient peut-  
être à se dérouler symétriquement c'est-à-dire que  
là-haut elle continuerait à croître toujours  
indifférente et verte comme dit-on les cheveux  
continuent à pousser sur les crânes des morts la  
seule différence étant que je boufferais les pissen-  
lits par la racine bouffant là où elle pisse suant  
nos corps emperlés exhalant cette âcre et forte  
odeur de racine, de mandragore, j'avais lu que les  
naufragés les érudits se nourrissaient de racines de  
glands et à un moment elle le prit d'abord entre ses  
lèvres puis tout entier dans sa bouche comme un  
enfant goulé c'était comme si nous buvions l'un l'autre  
se désaltérant nous gorgeant nous rassassiant affamés,  
espérant apaiser calmer un peu ma faim j'essayai de  
la mâcher pensant c'est pareil à de la salade, le  
jus vert et âpre faisant mes dents râpeuses un brin  
éfilé me coupa la langue comme un rasoir brûlant [.]  
(p.258)

The passage is dominated by the perspective of inversion : "l'herbe se nourrirait de ma chair"; "comme on passe de l'autre côté d'un miroir"

(note the visual frame of the brackets "(de cet autre côté)"). The shift of referential context from the ditch to Corinne is actuated, as Stephen Heath has pointed out<sup>12</sup>, through the *paronomastic* association of "pissenlits" and "pisse", as well as through the pun in "gland" meaning acorn and penis. Furthermore the juxtaposition "vert et âpre" leads us back, through "râpeuses", to the passage examined earlier where "râpeuses" is contiguous with "vert foncé". One can see, therefore, that "foncé" has shifted from one semantic context, that of colour, to two others, "war" ("foncer" in the sense of incision) and the male sexual organ (Georges and Corinne are symbiotically immersed in each other). The theme of sexuality can therefore be seen to be dominated by the "via rupta" motif. The two contexts of "Corinne" and "route" are mixed: the text "straddles" both. Moreover, Georges cuts his tongue on a "brin effilé [...] comme un rasoir brûlant". The text repeats the same association as the one made at the start of the novel between Corinne and de Reixach's sword:

toute la lumière et la gloire sur l'acier  
virginal [...] seulement, vierge, il y a  
belle lurette qu'elle ne l'était plus [...] (p.13)

The pun in "virginal" forms part of the web of associations between incision and sexuality in the novel. Blum foregrounds this association by noting the surgical connotations of eroticism:

elle semble attendre un acte d'une précision  
et d'une nudité sinon chirurgicale comme le  
suggère l'idée de quelque chose qui perce,  
pénètre, s'enfonce en crissant dans l'étroite  
chair, du moins presque médical [...] (p.192)

The "via rupta" motif also influences the references to writing in the novel. The association here is based on the etymological derivation of the word "écriture" which is the same as the one for

the English word "writing", described by I.J.Gelb as follows:

The English word "to write" corresponds to the Old Norse rita, "to incise (runes)", and modern German reissen, einritzen "to tear, to incise". The Greek word γράφειν, "to write", as in English "graphic, phonography", etc., is the same as "to carve", German kerben. Latin scribere, German schreiben, English "scribe, inscribe", etc., originally meant "to incise" as we can see from its connection with the Greek ὀκρίσθαι, "to incise, to scratch". 14

The episode in which Georges meets his father at the farm focusses on two elements: the father's writing which is "raturée et surchargée" and the newspapers "en désordre et froissés à force d'avoir été relus" (p.33); and the double reflection on the father's spectacles of the tractor's circular trajectory ploughing the land.<sup>15</sup> Writing here is associated with its etymological derivation from "frayage" which is also a sign of the memory process, as in the gesticulating figure of a man whose shadow glides like an ink stain across the surface of the road:

(semblable à une tache d'encre qui se ferait déplacée rapidement sur la route sans laisser de traces, comme sur une toile cirée ou une matière vitrifiée) (p.107)

The description of the shadows cast by the horses repeats the same motif:

comme une tache d'encre aux multiples bavures se dénouant et se renouant, glissant sans laisser de traces sur les décombres, les morts, l'espèce de trainée, de scuellure, de sillage d'épaves que laisse derrière elle la guerre. (p.26)<sup>16</sup>

Writing and memory are caught in an endless process of transmutation and osmosis, never attaining a fixed goal. This is the defeat which Georges experiences in his attempt to reconstitute the past through Corinne:

des jours à jamais abolis qu'on ne retrouve



jamais qu'avais-je cherché en elle espéré  
poursuivi jusque sur son corps dans son  
corps des mots des sons aussi peu que lui  
avec ses illusoires feuilles de papier noircies  
de pattes de mouches des paroles que prononçaient  
nos lèvres pour nous abuser nous-mêmes vivre  
une vie de sons sans plus de réalité sans plus  
de consistance que ce rideau sur lequel nous  
croyions voir le paon brodé remuer palpiter  
respirer/. (pp.274-5)

However, although the "via rupta" leads nowhere, its very multiplicity of direction, reflecting the polyphonic "vie de sons" of fictional writing, is a source of pleasure and meaning for the reader. The productive play of the writing (both on the level of "signifié" and of "signifiant") is manifest in the bursts of intense paronomastic association, as in "moule poulpe pulpe vulve" (p.53), "la même houri la même haletante hoquetante haquenée" (p.296), and "liesses, comme liesse kermesse Hénin nennin Hirson hérisson hirsute" (p.309). A similar linguistic activity is evident, in a more implicit and diluted form, between textual elements spread over the whole of the novel. One such example centres round the punning play of the word "saillie" referring to sexuality and horse-riding. (This association is also formed by the pun in "chevaucher" and in the reference to Corinne as "l'alezanne-femme" (p.185). Thus "saillie" refers to de Reixach's race meetings, "discutant de saillies (bêtes et humains)", (p.20) and to the sexual act, "qui avait chevauché, sailli sa femme ni plus ni moins qu'une jument" (p.283). The word also appears in a reference to perception of frame. Georges perceives the dead horse as a mass of changing contours:

les contours se modifiant d'une façon continue, c'est-à-dire cette espèce de destruction et de reconstruction simultanée des lignes et des volumes (les saillies s'affaissant par degrés tandis que d'autres reliefs semblent se soulever, se profilent, puis s'affaissent et disparaissent à leur tour) au fur et à mesure que l'angle de vue se déplace/. (p.29)

Another example of the use of the word "saillie" in denoting inversion of perspective appears when Blum refers to the engraving depicting a half naked woman who resembles a statue:

une de ces Marianne de plâtre des salles d'école  
ou de mairie où la poussière que nul plumeau ne  
vient jamais déranger s'accumule en couches grises  
sur toutes les saillies, inversant ainsi les  
reliefs / 7 (p.249)

Finally, the word appears in a description which highlights the connection between writing and "frayage":

la terre nue rayée de courbes concentriques  
correspondant aux saillies de la traverse  
inférieure lorsqu'elle pivotait en frottant  
le sol autour du montant / 7 (p.249)

The repetition of the same word in these different contexts serves to highlight the different themes and motifs, drawing them together in systems of combination and permutation which form the layers of signification in the novel. (The following section will include a description of another such pattern of association centring this time around the word "rapacité".) Our reading of La Route des Flandres shows that Simon's novel can be seen to anticipate the following lines by Jacques Derrida which were inspired by Levi-Strauss's analysis of the Nambikwara tribe:

il faudrait méditer d'ensemble la possibilité  
de la route et de la différence comme écriture,  
l'histoire de l'écriture et l'histoire de la  
route, de la rupture, de la "via rupta", de la  
voie rompue, frayée, "fracta", de l'espace de  
réversibilité et de répétition tracé par  
l'ouverture, l'écart et l'espacement violent de  
la nature, de la forêt naturelle, sauvage,  
sauvage. La "silva" est sauvage, la "via rupta"  
s'écrit, se discerne s'inscrit violemment comme  
différence, comme forme imposée dans la "hyle",  
dans la forêt, dans le bois comme matière / 17

### 3. Inversion and osmosis.

Merleau-Ponty, who often referred to Simon's work in his lectures, gives an interesting description of inversion of perception by focussing on the double meaning of the word "sens".

Pour le sujet de la perception, le visage vu "à l'envers" est méconnaissable. Si quelqu'un est étendu sur un lit et que je le regarde en me plaçant à la tête du lit, pour un moment ce visage est normal. [...] Si le spectacle se prolonge, il change soudain d'aspect: le visage devient monstrueux, ses expressions effrayantes, les cils les sourcils prennent un air de matérialité que je ne leur ai jamais trouvé. Pour la première fois je vois ce visage renversé comme si c'était la sa posture "naturelle". [...] Il faut que mon regard qui parcourt le visage et qui a ses directions de marches favorites ne reconnaisse le visage que s'il en rencontre les détails dans un certain ordre irréversible, il faut que le sens même de l'objet - ici le visage et ses expressions - soit lié à son orientation comme le montre assez la double acceptation du mot "sens". Renverser un objet, c'est lui ôter sa signification.<sup>18</sup>

Merleau-Ponty's analysis applies to La Route des Flandres (as well as to the other later novels) on several levels. Forced to turn back the pages of the novel in order to retrace its textual connections, the reader discovers the material reality of the text and no longer conceives of it as a mirror of that other reality situated "hors texte". Indeed the reader must now play a productive role since the polysemic associations are not laid out neatly for him to receive in one or two linear readings. On another level, the pattern of signification produced by the combination of motifs is often one of inversion. We shall now examine the play of inversion in the motif of sexuality which pervades the novel. The progression from the second to the third "éclat de narration" introduced, as we saw, a substitution of interlocutors. Georges's dialogue with Blum is substituted by Georges's sexual encounter with Corinne. As has already been stated,

Corinne's appearance is prefigured by the description of the peasant girl in the village. However, the presence of femininity can be perceived even earlier in the text. As the riders approach the village an apocalyptic figure appears, presumably a scout informing the captain, de Reixach, of the whereabouts of the enemy:

quelqu'un descendant le long de la colonne au grand trot, la monture ferrant légèrement, faisant entendre à chaque foulée un tintement clair, métallique, et noire sur noir, une forme surgit du néant. (p.38)

The appearance of the anonymous figure is heralding the appearance of the "paysanne" in the village. The difference between the two blacknesses is that one is feminine and the other masculine: what distinguishes the figure, "une forme", from the night, "du néant", is gender. Moreover, the gender of the two nouns is already a semantic inversion of its referent: "une forme" is a man, and "du néant" is "la nuit". Blum too is described in an inverted relationship with the girl. The latter's "souliers d'homme" echo the former's "étroite figure de fille". In his éléments de Sémiologie, Roland Barthes refers to Martinet's discussion of gender:

Pour Martinet, au contraire, la marque est à la lettre un élément "en plus"; ceci n'empêche nullement dans le cas du masculin/féminin, le parallélisme qui existe normalement entre la marque du signifiant et celle du signifié: "masculin" correspond en fait à une indifférence des sexes, à une sorte de généralité abstraite (il fait beau, on est venu), en face de quoi le féminin est bien marqué: marque sémantique et marque formelle vont en effet de pair: là où on veut dire plus on ajoute un signe supplémentaire.<sup>19</sup>

The peasant girl's femininity is defined as a trace or imprint, "semblable à une taie sur un oeil aveugle", denoting the mark of femininity as the mark of difference.

tout ton sur ton, sans couleurs ni valeurs,

comme si murette, noyer et pommiers (la jeune femme avait maintenant disparu) étaient pour ainsi dire fossilisés n'avaient laissé là que leur empreinte dans cette matière inconsistante, spongieuse et uniformément grise qui s'infiltrait maintenant peu à peu dans la grange, le visage de Blum comme un masque gris quand Georges se retourna comme une feuille de papier déchiré avec deux trous pour les yeux, la bouche grise aussi / 7 (p.40)

This neutral, uniform greyness, which is also matched by Blum's face ("comme un masque gris"), contrasts with the mark of femininity as difference. Like the peacock on the curtain (p.122), deriving from the peacock reflection on the stained-glass window in Proust's Combray, the peasant girl is a symbol of space as origin ("creuset originel" (p.41)) and of the text's self-generative framework ("luminescente, comme si sa peau était elle même la source de lumière" (p.42)). This identification is confirmed later on in the novel where the incantatory magic of language is said to produce "les images chatoyantes et lumineuses" (p.184).

The dominating influence of femininity affects the motif of encrustation as expressed in the description of the faces of Blum, "masque gris" (p.40), and Georges, "mince pellicule de saleté et d'insomnie interposée entre son visage et l'extérieur" (p.39). The comparison with the stories of polar expeditions, "où l'on raconte que la peau reste attachée au fer gelé", emphasizes the element of impenetrability. The appearance of femininity in the person of the "paysanne" immediately alters the motif. The soldiers enter the barn "comme s'ils avaient pénétré (pénétrant en même temps dans l'odeur âcre des bêtes, du foin) dans une sorte d'espace organique" (p.38). Similarly, when Georges first touches Corinne the initial sensation of exterior envelope changes into one of envelopment:

entre sa paume et la peau soyeuse du bras,  
encore quelque chose, pas plus épais qu'une

feuille de papier à cigarette, mais quelque chose s'interposant, c'est-à-dire la sensation du toucher éprouvée comme légèrement en retraite, comme lorsque les doigts engourdis par le froid se posent sur un objet et ne le perçoivent, semble-t-il qu'à travers une pellicule, une sorte de corne d'insensibilité [.] (p.238)

comme si non pas entre eux maintenant mais autour d'eux, les enserrant, l'air avait partout cette fallacieuse consistance du verre, invisible et cassant, d'une terrifiante fragilité [.] (p.239)

On the level of textual composition, the relationship between Georges and Corinne is based on inversion. Their first meeting is immediately preceded by the description of a queen on a playing card:

rien qu'un simple bout de carton, donc, une de ces reines vêtues d'écarlate, énigmatiques, et symétriquement dédoublées, comme si elles se reflétaient dans un miroir, vêtues d'une de ces robes mi-partie rouge et verte aux lourds et rituels ornements, aux rituels et symboliques attributs (rose, sceptre, hermine) [.] (p.235)

The motif of "dédoublement" as mirror inversion is further emphasized by the fact that Georges and Corinne are at first separated by the glass pane of the aquarium, "exactement comme s'il s'était tenu de l'autre côté de la glace d'aquarium" (p.236). The reference to the wardrobe mirror in the hotel at the first "éclat de narration" also underlines this aspect of their relationship.

A repetition of the description of Georges's meeting with his father, coming after the third "éclat", is re-framed within the inverted perspective of femininity. The reflection of the farmer on Georges's father's spectacles is now described as "comme une noire auréole reflétée deux fois par les lunettes" (p.224). The reflection is "feminised", echoing the comparison, "semblable à une taie sur un oeil aveugle" (p.39), in the description of the "paysanne". The

influence of femininity on Georges is manifest in two ways. Firstly, the sexual act is described by Blum in terms of osmosis, with the male sexual organ acting as a neutral connecting link between the two lovers:

l'espece de bete qui possède deux têtes,  
quatre bras, quatre jambes et deux troncs  
soudés par le ventre au moyen de cet  
organe commun (ou si l'on préfère égale-  
ment étranger, car le membre de l'homme  
ne semble-t-il pas s'enfoncer à l'inté-  
rieur du corps de celui-ci comme il  
s'enfonce dans celui de la femme, s'y  
prolonger jusqu'au plus profond des  
entrailles par un membre égal et sy-  
métrique? [.] (pp.192)

Georges's sexual relationship with Corinne is also presented within an inter-penetrative or osmotic perspective, "nous buvions l'un l'autre" (p.259).

The second way in which Georges is influenced by the motif of femininity is in the inverted play of gender in the language of the text. The following passage contains a shift from a description of Georges lying in a ditch during the war to a description of him lying with Corinne. The shift hinges on the metaphorical association produced by the writing. In addition to the fusion of the two time spans, the description produces an inverted relationship between Georges and Corinne:

et peut-être étais-je mort peut-être cette  
sentinelle avait-elle tiré la première et  
plus vite, peut-être étais-je toujours couché  
là-bas dans l'herbe odorante du fossé dans  
ce sillon de la terre respirant humant sa  
noire et âcre senteur d'humus l'appant son  
chose rose mais non pas rose rien que le  
noir dans les ténèbres touffues me léchant  
le visage mais en tous cas mes mains ma  
langue pouvant la toucher la connaître  
m'assurer, mes mains aveugles rassurées la  
touchant partout courant sur elle [.] je n'en  
finissais pas de la parcourir rampant sous elle  
explorant dans la nuit découvrant son corps

immense et ténébreux [...] Je luvais sans fin  
sentant cette tige sortie de moi cet arbre  
poussant ramifiant ses racines à l'intérieur  
de mon ventre [...] 7 (pp. 6-7)

The double reference contained in the feminine pronouns "sa", "la", and "elle" ("terre" and Corinne) provides an opportunity for a shift of narrative. The passage also produces, by means of play on gender, inversion between Georges and Corinne. The redundant gender of "la sentinelle" <sup>20</sup> (a feminine noun referring to a masculine guard) prefigures the inversion of "cette tige sortie de moi" (feminine noun referring to Georges's sexual organ) and "son chose rose" (masculine noun referring to Corinne's sexual organ).

The dominating presence of femininity, in which George is engulfed, can therefore be interpreted as a symbol of the metaphorical, transformational and self-generative force of fictional language which forms the basis of Le Route des Blanches.

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#### 4. In search of Irena.

Our analysis so far has concentrated on the absorbent power of the text. Georges is metonymically engulfed by his textual surroundings. In other words he is absorbed by everything with which he is in contiguous contact. Thus Georges is "integrated" with both his interlocutors. With Corinne, the onosis takes the form of sexual inversion and interpenetration. With Blum, the confusion is manifest in terms of depersonalization of dialogue ("Et Blum (ou Georges) [...] et Georges (ou Blum)") (p. 118). Georges's immersion in the text as a whole is expressed in his loss of narratorial identity at the second "débat de narration" when the narrative shifts from "je" to "il". In terms of a poetics of composition, Georges's absorption in the narrative, being based on a metonymic axis, can be described



as the result of the "pull" of the syntagmatic chain of association. <sup>21</sup>

However, another class of associations exists in the novel, this time based on the principle of analogy. The "dédoublement" produced by the relationship of inversion and osmosis between Georges and his textual surroundings is paralleled by the "redoublement" produced by his identification with his ancestry. Georges's decision to work on the farm can be seen as an attempt at ancestral identification, following in the footsteps of his grandfather who was an illiterate peasant. Thus, if narratorial identity is dispersed or "dédoublé" by the syntagmatic chain of textual associations under the impetus of the theme of eroticism, attempts to assert this identity are made by the paradigmatic associations surrounding the theme of ancestry.<sup>22</sup> In order to arrive at the truth he is searching for, Georges scours Corinne's body (pp.274-5) and the portrait of de Reixach's ancestor. In the latter case, Georges's attempt to reconstruct the ancestor's past is depicted in his interpreting what in the portrait "n'était en réalité que la préparation brun rouge de la toile mise à nu par une longue craquelure" (p.57) as a blood-stained bullet-hole in the ancestor's forehead. Georges's imagination had even led him to check the wall behind the painting for traces of the bullet. The episode is an example of Georges's general obsession with arriving at knowledge about the past. His "blind" obsession only leads him to mistake art for "reality". It is not until the end that Georges learns the lesson of Marcel in A la recherche du temps perdu: that the past is not to be regained in the present, and that the essence of objects is not located spatially inside them. Equally, "reality" is not to be found in art. Neither is the truth about de Reixach's apparent suicide to be found in Corinne.

Instead, the only reality which exists in the novel is the web of fiction woven by the generative force of language. In other words, there is no escape route out of the syntagmatic chain of the text. Stephen Heath has perceptively noted the parallelism between La Route des Flandres and Proust's novel:

What is the space, or scene, of the realization of identity? The answer for Simon is clear: that of language, the milieu of our transformation. To define an identity, the reality of that identity, becomes, as for Proust, a task of writing, the production of that text ("le seul livre vrai") that gives the possibility of the constitution of one's self through the reading operated by its writing ("cette lecture - un acte de création où nul ne peut suppléer"), the text thus grasped as reality ("la vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la seule vie par conséquent réellement vécue").<sup>23</sup>

Georges's search for identity takes the form of attempts to imagine or interpret a number of internal "récits" set within the novel. Thus Georges and Blum attempt to reconstitute de Reixach's past in order to discover the reason for his apparent suicide. This leads to conjectures about the life of de Reixach's ancestor whom Georges, basing his argument on the evidence of a portrait and an engraving, also imagines to have committed suicide on account of an unfaithful wife.<sup>24</sup> But just as Georges is submerged in the syntagmatic chain of the text, so too the different narratives are confused. This confusion is explicitly highlighted when Georges accuses Blum of intermingling elements from the lives of the two de Reixachs. Blum's reply is that the so-called evidence upon which they are building their hypotheses is a total invention on the part of Georges's imagination. Indeed the fictionality of all the narratives in the novel is further outlined by the interchangeability of the different discourses in which the narratives are set. The following lines convey the convoluted

nature of the novel's narrative structure:

et Georges (à moins que ce ne fût toujours Blum, s'interrompant lui-même, bouffonnant, à moins qu'il (Georges) ne fût pas en train de dialoguer sous la froide pluie saxonne avec un petit juif souffreteux - ou l'ombre d'un petit juif, et qui n'allait bientôt plus être qu'un cadavre - un de plus - de petit juif - mais avec lui-même, c'est-à-dire son double, tout seul sous la pluie grise, parmi les rails, les wagons de charbon, ou peut-être des années plus tard, toujours seul (quoiqu'il fût maintenant couché à côté d'une tiède chair de femme), toujours en tête-à-tête avec ce double, ou avec Blum, ou avec personne): "Nous y voilà: l'Histoire [.] (p.187)

The long parenthesis separating the name of the speaker from his speech underlines the overwhelming uncertainty as to who is speaking and from where and when: in other words the brackets and the brackets within brackets draw our attention to the basic absence of a stable narrative frame in the novel. Symbols of frame abound in the novel. Apart from the visual description of "dédoublement" which we have already seen, such as the figure eight and the double picture of a queen on a playing card, there is the baroque lettering on the cover of an edition of Rousseau:

Hic liber - l'H démesuré, emphatique, en forme de deux parenthèses se tournant le dos et reliées par un trait onduleux, les extrémités des parenthèses s'enroulant en colimaçon comme les motifs de ces grilles rongées de rouille qui gardent encore l'entrée de parcs envahis par les ronces [.] (p.83)

The "trait onduleux" can thus be seen to be a symbol of the confusion of narrative context and discourse in the novel. Another example of focus on frame can be found in the excerpt of the Latin translation manuscript describing a painting of a female centaur:

le ~~noeud~~ et la jointure où la partie humaine finit avec la partie cheval est certainement admirable l'oeil distingue la délicatesse de la blanche carnation dans la femme de la

netteté du pelage éclatant dans la bête d'un  
bay clair mais on confond ensuite en voulant  
déterminer les Confins (pp.55-6)

The repetition in "confond" and "Confins" emphasizes the indefinite quality of narrative frame in the novel. Finally, a third example of focus on frame can be found in the description of Georges, very drunk, looking at a mirror which is hanging at an angle above the bar of a café:

et sans doute à cause de l'ivresse, impossible  
d'avoir visuellement conscience d'autre chose  
que cela cette glace et ce qui s'y reflétait à  
quoi mon regard se cramponnait pour ainsi dire  
comme un ivrogne se cramponne à un reverbère  
comme au seul point fixe dans un univers vague (p.207)

The mirror, however, is not a very stable "point fixe", as is conveyed by its reflection:

cette fois je pouvais voir grâce à la glace  
dans l'encadrement de la porte le bas de la  
jupe de la femme ses deux mollets et ses  
deux pieds chaussés de pantoufles le tout  
incliné comme si elle tombait en arrière (p.207)

The woman standing "dans l'encadrement de la porte" reiterates the description of the engraving in which the "servante" is standing in the doorway of her bedroom "n'ayant pas encore, elle, franchi le seuil" (p.86) and the earlier description of the "paysanne" momentarily hesitating at the barn entrance:

sa silhouette se découpant un instant en sombre  
tant qu'elle fut dans la pénombre de la grange,  
puis, sitôt le seuil franchi, semblant s'évanouir (p.39)

This focus on frame is later reformulated in terms of perception.

Georges's "champ de vision", "cette sorte de frange qui s'étend à droite et à gauche de notre vue", registers the external world "sous forme de taches, de vagues contours" (p.250).

The widespread activity of osmosis and narrative frame shifts produces a structural void at the centre or, to use Pingaud's term, "foyer" of

the novel. Each of the "framings" of the novel's discourses is ultimately negated. There is no macroscopic or global narrative frame:

Ce n'était pas à son père qu'il voulait parler.  
Ce n'était même pas à la femme couchée invisible  
à côté de lui, ce n'était peut-être même pas à Elum  
qu'il était en train d'expliquer en chuchotant  
dans le noir [.] (p.100)

Moreover, this lack of a central perspective enters even onto the thematic level of the novel: "la disparition de toute idée ce tout concept" (p.299).

As Stephen Heath has said, the only true identity in the novel is that of the writing. Georges identifies the fictional or, more precisely, the intertextual nature of his experiences by evoking Apuleius's The Golden Ass: "Je lui dirai que j'avais déjà lu en latin ce qui m'est arrivé" (p.100). The basis of this association is the activity of metamorphosis which pervades both novels.

After a final negation of narrative frame:

Mais j'avais-je vraiment vu ou cru le noir  
ou tout simplement imaginé après coup ou  
encore rêvé, peut-être ~~demais-je~~ j'avais-je  
jamais cessé de dormir les yeux grands  
ouverts (p.314),

the novel ends with a metaphor of the neutrality of fiction and the absence of any essence outside of the language and of the reader's participation in the production of associations and combinations in the text. Broust's "vie de sons" is echoed in the evocation of an empty frame in the last few lines of the novel:

le canon sporadique frappant les vergers  
céserts avec un bruit sourd monumental et  
creux comme une porte en train de battre  
agitée par le vent dans une maison vide [.] (p.314)

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Ce n'était pas à son père qu'il voulait parler.  
Ce n'était même pas à la femme couchée invisible  
à côté de lui, ce n'était tout-à-fait non plus à "l'un"  
qu'il était en train d'expliquer en chuchotant  
dans le noir /./ (p.100)

Moreover, this lack of a central perspective extends over onto the thematic level of the novel: "la disparition de toute idée ce tout concept" (p.299). As Stephen Heath has said, the only true identity in the novel is that of the writing. Georges identifies the fictional or, more precisely, the intertextual nature of his experiences by evoking Apuleius's The Golden Ass: "Je lui dirai que j'avais déjà lu en latin ce qui m'est arrivé" (p.100). The basis of this association is the activity of metamorphosis which pervades both novels.

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### Chapter Three

#### The Framework of Le Palace and Histoire.

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##### 1. Variations of narrative frame.

More than a synonym for "narrative structure", the concept of "narrative frame" which we have been using so far refers to the system of narrative order emanating from a stable "point fixe" which in most conventional novels either takes the form of a reliable narrator (as in first person narratives) or of a fixed spatio-temporal setting (as in third person narratives). In other words, as Uspensky and Lotman underline in their reference to visual art, the stress is on perspective. Narrative frame is the perspective in which the narration is formulated, as well as the perspective from which the reader can decode this formulation. However, the main characteristic of the "nouveau roman" is that this frame is fundamentally disturbed. As the previous chapter showed, the "point fixe" of narrative perspective in La Route des Flandres is missing. Firstly, the narrator is submerged in the writing (resulting in an alternation of first and third person narratives). Secondly the three "éclats de narration" produce spatio-temporal shifts in the instance of narration culminating in a textual acknowledgement of an absence of global frame in the novel. The subversion of narrative frame in Le Palace and Histoire, although equally profound, differs in type from the one in La Route des Flandres. The narrative perspective in La Route des Flandres may be called "absent frame" while the one in Le Palace may be described as "multiple frame" and the one in Histoire as "frame shift". La Bataille de Pharsale, as we shall see in part two, forms the final stage in this development of narrative perspective.

Dominique Lanceraux distinguishes between the narrative structures

of the first two novels in the following way:

Dans La Route, le présent "je me rappelle" s'est trouvé rejeté dans le passé d'une autre temporalité; les diverses pistes énonciatives n'ont cessé d'éloigner dans un toujours-plus-tard le présent de l'écriture, bien que son incessant "présent" partout s'imprime - en ce qui définit pour nous la caractéristique majeure du style simonien. Ici [dans Le Palace] l'on dispose d'un présent d'énonciation, attesté à plusieurs reprises, qui ne coïncide en rien avec le temps de la remémoration: il peut donc compter pour un présent d'écriture déclaré.<sup>1</sup>

A crude distinction between the two novels is that La Route des Flandres is written (more or less completely) in the first person narrative and Le Palace is in the third person narrative. But such a distinction is clearly unsatisfactory since neither novel is structured in such an unambiguous way. Although the central character in Le Palace appears in the third person, it is nevertheless from his point of view that most of the events in the novel are narrated. However, the actual narration is in the third person and is thus situated outside the consciousness of the main character. The instance of narration is, as Lanceraux says, "un présent d'écriture". Furthermore, the narrative covers two separate time spans. The novel begins with a description of events taking place in Barcelona (though the city is never named) at the time of the civil war. A few pages later a new time span is introduced:

Puis il se vit, c'est-à-dire des années plus tard, et lui, ce résidu de lui-même, ou plutôt cette trace, cette salissure (cet excrément en quelque sorte) laissée derrière soi: dérisoire personnage que l'on voit s'agiter, ridicule et présomptueux, là-bas, très loin, comme dans le petit bout de la lorgnette, gesticulant, répétant éternellement à la demande de la mémoire [...]. Répétant indéfiniment la même tranche de vie, importun, odieux, s'imposant s'immisçant de force - pouvant donc se voir avec une sorte d'étonnement un peu agacé, d'incrédulité, pensant: "Ça: moi? Ça..?" regardant le double



microscopique et effaré de lui-même: c'était  
presque quinze ans plus tard (p.20)

The student has now returned, fifteen years later, to Barcelona and is reconstructing his former visit in his mind. The interesting point to note is that the introduction of a new time span is accompanied by a consciousness of "dédoublement" on the part of the protagonist. However, unlike La Route des Flandres and Histoire, the narrative framework of Le Falace is not itself seriously disturbed by "dédoublement". This is partly due to the fact that the novel is in the third person narrative and is consequently less prone to shift of narratorial identity, but also partly because the novel is based on a principle of multiplicity of frame or of narrative "redoublement". Thus the student's experiences in Barcelona 1936 are mirrored in his experiences in Barcelona fifteen years later. Furthermore, the narrative of the student's experiences is itself paralleled by the narrative of the Italian anarchist, "l'homme-récit". Although the shifts from one narrative to the other often produce ambiguity and although there are many similarities and points of contact between the different layers of narrative, the novel contains no crisis of narratorial identity.

Dominique Lanceraux's analysis implicitly recognizes this lack of textual "dédoublement":

L'Italien, l'étudiant, le scripteur: trois voix  
(rôles, instances) narratives qui se superposent,  
s'entrecroisent, imprimant son mouvement au texte;  
celle qui rapporte les conditions de l'écoute et  
organise sa propre "entente"; l'étudiant "lit" dans  
le Récit de l'homme-fusil ce qu'il se rappellera  
s'être représenté de l'épisode; celle enfin qui  
réalise l'inscription. 2

The three "characters" are separated from one another in terms of function. The Italian is "l'homme-récit", driven by an irrepressible urge to recount, as John Sturrock notes:

The function of the Italian in the novel is to be the Story-teller with a capital S, and his ultimate suicide is an acknowledgement that the need for him is now past, that the story has now been told. 4

The student's function is one of reassessment and reconstruction. Thus, there are frequent references to the student visualizing, or, imagining the events which the Italian relates to him. The student's function is as futile as the Italian's. The former strives after cognition ("Mais pourquoi raconte-t-il tout ça?" (pp.58,76)) and the latter struggles to give an accurate description of the past, the futility of which is expressed by the detailed, geometrical sketch which he draws on a piece of paper (pp.60-3). The "scripteur", finally, is the third person narrative which structures the novel's composition placing its various elements, including the characters, in relation with one another.

The compartmentalized nature of Le Palace's narrative structure distinguishes it from the structure of La Route des Flandres. In the latter novel the narrator is at once story-teller, interpreter, and, fictively at least, "scripteur". In Le Palace the three functions are kept apart.<sup>5</sup> However, despite this compositional division, a sense of ambiguity and confusion may arise from the continuous flow of the writing, the innumerable shifts from one time span to the next, and from the absence of explicit delineation of narrative frame. Thus an ambiguity can be seen to surround the description of the suicide at the end of the novel. Dominique Lanceraux identifies the suicide as that of the student, whereas for Anthony Pugh and John Sturrock<sup>7</sup> it is the Italian who commits suicide. The importance, however, is not so much in which identification is correct and which false but in that the confusion arises at a moment of double death: the suicide of a character and the end of the novel. It is almost as if

the artificial dividing line between the different narrative agents (the student, the Italian, and the "scripteur") dissolves and the three separate narrative units merge into the cloacal reality of the text. The principle of "redoublement" governing the narrative and fictional structure of the novel indirectly determines the fusion of the characters' identities:

(l'Américain, l'Italien et l'étudiant - ou  
plutôt ces trois parties, ces trois fragments  
de lui-même qui étaient un Américain, un  
homme-fusil et un jeune étourneau / p.157)

It is interesting to note the reference to the starling which, since the prominent presence of birds is directly related to the movement of writing in the novel, indicates a desire for identification with the "scripteur". The desire for fusion of identity is reformulated in the student's effort to focus on "cette invisible lamelle de temps qui isolait deux univers" (p.96).

While La Route des Flandres can be described as a novel whose initial narrative frame is gradually fragmented and dispersed, Le Palace can be said to reveal an opposite movement of narrative development. Here the initial diversity of narrative frame strives after a unification of identity. The narrative perspective of Histoire is different again. In this novel the narrative returns to the first person singular. Like Le Palace, there are two main time spans. The main one, which we may call the "macroscopic frame" since it englobes all the other "micro time spans", stretches over a day in the life of the narrator who returns to his childhood home to deal with the inheritance of the property. This time span alternates with another which is set in the narrator's childhood when he lived with his grandmother, uncle Charles, and his cousins Corinne and Paulou. Furthermore, another time span (or "narrative sequence") is

interspersed throughout the novel: the narrator's visit to Greece with his wife, Hélène. The narrator's relationship with Hélène is clouded with obscurity, the only clear facts for the reader being that the couple separated as a result of infidelity on the part of the husband and also that Hélène is now dead. For Anthony Pugh, this narrative sequence is central to the whole novel:

l'énigme centrale de Histoire [...], le récit qui ne se laisse pas raconter, toujours brouillé, contourné, censuré. Le lecteur imagine, construit, et détruit cette chose que l'on ne veut pas, ou ne peut pas nommer.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the narrator, inspired by his mother's collection of postcards, attempts to recapture his parents' past and, with the help of a photograph, to reconstruct a moment in uncle Charles's youth. Thus the novel contains several time spans but, unlike La Route des Flandres, the over-all narrative frame is unaffected. There are no "éclats de narration" in Histoire: all the events and imaginative reconstructions emerge from within the first narrative perspective (that is, the narrator's return to his childhood home). The "présent d'écriture" remains, however, outside this perspective since the narrative is written in the past tense. But unlike La Route des Flandres which persistently focussed on the absence of global frame created by the "présent d'écriture", the narrative in Histoire undergoes a different type of disturbance. Here the subversion is not due to the undermining of the dominant narrative frame, but to a shift of narratorial identity. The shift occurs during a "reconstruction" of uncle Charles's visit to Van Velden's studio. Paralleling the "je/il" alternation which we have already discussed with respect to La Route des Flandres, a similar play with the personal pronoun "je" can be found in Histoire. However, while in the former novel the two

pronouns refer to the same identity (Georges), in the latter novel it is the pronoun which remains constant while its referent is substituted or, to be more exact, its narrative frame is substituted. The narrator substitutes himself for uncle Charles during the studio scene description:

(petits gâteaux farineux durs Me demandais ou  
elle les trouvait [7] (p.287)

The shift of identity takes place under very Froustian circumstances. Just as the "madeleine" acted as a vehicle of transference from the present to the past, so too the tea session with the "petits gâteaux" at the painter's studio provides the setting for a transference, this time of identity. We can speak here of "frame shift" since by means of the ambiguous play of the shifter "je"<sup>9</sup> the narrator is transported into uncle Charles's past, defying the logic of narrative.<sup>10</sup>

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## 2. Interchangeability

The instance of frame shift which we have been considering is immediately preceded by a striking description of visual superimposition:

chaque image empiétant sur la précédente ou  
plutôt semblant dériver d'elle engendrée par  
elle en quelque sorte se décollant d'elle  
comme si elles étaient toutes emboîtées les  
unes dans les autres à la façon de ces tables  
gigognes [7] (p.287)

Similarly, earlier in the novel, a sense of spatio-temporal superimposition is created by a succession of paragraphs describing the numerous postcards which the narrator comes across inadvertently. The passage presents a succession of spatio-temporal settings:

et un peu plus tôt (huit heures ou neuf heures du  
matin peut-être, à Saigon (p.255)  
et peut-être une heure dans la matinée à Eberfeld (p.255)

et environ midi la fin de la matinée à  
Tamatave (p.256)  
et deux heures de l'après-midi (Singapore)  
(p.256)  
et trois heures de l'après-midi (Jura)  
(pp.259-60)  
et trois heures de l'après-midi (Singapore)  
(p.260)  
et sept heures du matin (Madagascar) (p.260)  
et cinq heures du soir (Helvétia) (pp.260-1)  
et onze heures du matin à Zanzibar (p.261)  
et cinq heures du soir (Hérault) (p.262)

The chain of postcards culminates in a sense of osmosis, dismantling  
the barriers of time and space:

et aucune heure aucun temps mille ans avant  
ou après et avant quoi ou après quoi et pas  
de l'eau mais une étendue jaunâtre boueuse  
qui s'écoule glisse dans un clapotis monotone [.] (p.262)

The description of the postcards leads immediately *on to* the chapter  
which is entirely devoted to the Van Velden photograph which in turn  
acts as the context of the frame shift mentioned above. The shift of  
identity is therefore preceded by an emphatic reiteration of the  
motif of osmosis and interchangeability.

The reader can measure the degree of compositional frame play in  
both Le Palace and Histoire by tracing the motif of interchangeability  
on the narrative, thematic, and descriptive levels of the novels. We  
have already seen that the desire for transference of identity forms  
the focal point of both Le Palace and Histoire. In the former novel  
the student identifies himself with the other characters to the  
point of confusing the reader as to who commits suicide at the end.  
In the latter novel, the narrator actuates the shift by assuming the  
identity of uncle Charles. Thus one can describe the phenomenon here  
as one of interchangeability of identity. There is another way in  
which the narrative structure of the novels is dominated by the motif.

Italian in Le Palace (the assassination) in "reality" only lasted a few seconds, while its narration and the subsequent "reconstruction" made by the student extends over thirty pages. The simultaneity of the event cannot be reproduced by the narration which must content itself with a successive description. This discrepancy between fiction and reality, or between description and its referent, is even more striking at the start of the novel where the student's perusal of the interior of the building is translated into seven paragraphs each beginning with an enumeration, "premièrement", "deuxièmement" etc. (pp.7-9) An equivalent example can be found in Histoire: namely, the passage where the narrator attempts to reconstitute the setting of the photograph. The task is made even more difficult here by the fact that the reconstruction tries to take account of what happened immediately before and immediately after the picture was taken. Once again the discrepancy between description and its referent is accentuated by expressions such as "Ainsi tout d'abord ..." The inevitable failure of any description to represent its referent accurately renders all interpretative variations equally valuable, as in the case of the three versions of the studio scene offered by the narrator. The different fabrications of the memory or of the imagination which form the content of the narrative of both novels are, therefore, interchangeable.

Interchangeability on the level of theme is a very common feature of the novels. Firstly, the motif of "sameness" is repeated throughout both novels. For instance, on his return to the city, the main character in Le Palace is struck by the faces of the people around him:

les mêmes regards, les mêmes visages inusables  
impénétrables, interchangeables et sans âge (p.44)

Equally, the description of Van Velden's painting in Histoire stresses its interchangeability with the thousands of other paintings of the nude. The word "même" is repeated thirteen times in the space of one paragraph (p.270). The themes of commerce and revolution also provide both novels with ample opportunity for highlighting the dominant motif of interchangeability. However, there is one particular thematic manifestation of this motif which is of special interest to our analysis since it links up with the simultaneity/successivity antithesis mentioned above. In Le Palace, history is described as being constituted "au moyen non de simples migrations mais d'une série de mutations internes, de déplacements moléculaires" (p.12). The "palace" itself experiences an interchange of occupants: the decadent rich are replaced by the revolutionaries. The building itself remains. Language too, in the description of the Italian's obsessive narration, is described in similar terms:

comme s'il essayait d'arracher, de rejeter de lui cette violence, cette chose qui a élu domicile en lui, se sert de lui [...] (comme dans ces jeux où le perdant tire une carte une figure maudite ou maléfique, qu'il lui faut à tout prix refiler à un autre avant qu'elle le condamne définitivement) le possédant, le consommant [...] (pp.77-8)

The description of the statues in Histoire repeats the same motif:

pensant à tous deux dans le noir avec cette obscurité blafarde sur eux une uniforme couche de peinture grise qui ne les distinguait pas des draps, comme si le lit les draps leurs corps étaient faits uniformément de la même matière inanimée demi-nus dénudés ou plutôt dénués de tout dans cette solitude en quelque sorte bicéphale - apparemment intacts - en réalité en train de se décomposer à toute vitesse comme si sous la surface grise et polie semblable à du marbre travaillant s'acharnait un invisible et vorace grouillement [...] (p.359)

The delineation of internal, molecular transmutation is also present



in the description of the photograph which contrasts the sharp contours of the people who remained still while the camera was in operation, with the blurred face of Van Velden who, having set the automatic mechanism, did not have time to compose himself before the shot was taken:

la trace fuligineuse laissée par le visage  
au cours de ses divers changements de  
positions restituant à l'événement son  
épaisseur, postulant (à partir de l'unique  
cliché et collé à lui de part et d'autre,  
formant une sorte de barre quadrangulaire,  
de parallélépipède se prolongeant à l'infini)  
la double suite des instants passés et futurs,  
la double série, dans le même cadrage et le  
même décor, des positions respectivement  
occupées par les divers personnages avant et  
après (p.269)

The description of internal, molecular activity contained in an outer envelope or frame, as in the earlier examples, is here reformulated in terms of temporal depiction. The blurr in the photograph is a mark of movement, both temporal and spatial. The same frame includes the instants immediately before and after the snapshot was taken. The simultaneity/successivity opposition is re-stated in terms of an opposition between movement and immobility. But unlike the evocation of Muybridge-type photographs<sup>12</sup> where movement is represented in a series of snapshots taken by a camera with a fast shutter, the description of the blurr suggests a synthesis between mobility and immobility. Movement is expressed within stasis. Clearly the description is heralding the narrative frame shift which is the focal point of the novel: the internal interchange of identity in the "dédoublement" between the narrator and his uncle.

Finally, we can observe the same principle of interchangeability governing the descriptive framework of Histoire. Thus, for instance,

two distinct descriptive or fictional contexts are related by the writing. On his way to settle the business of the inheritance with Paulou, the narrator suddenly spots his cousin's house in the distance:

Puis plus rien que les vignes les haies de  
cypres les plantations d'abricotiers et les  
collines de loin en loin les toits d'une maison  
de campagne ou d'une cave dépassant d'un  
bouquet de pins de platanes et d'eucalyptus et  
parvenu en haut de la côte je la vis: à peine  
plus foncée que le ciel parfaitement immobile  
d'ici immatérielle comme une bande horizontale  
de peinture soigneusement passée au pinceau  
au-dessus du vert acide des vignes. (p.299)

The following paragraph shifts to the Van Velden studio scene and begins with the following lines:

parmi les toiles accrochées au mur il y avait  
un paysage avec des pins et entre les branches  
on pouvait voir comme des éclats de ciel en-  
chassés faits d'une pâte grasse bleutée comme  
des fragments d'email. (p.299)

The pine trees in the landscape described in the first paragraph are repeated in the painting in the second paragraph. Moreover, the figure of speech "comme une bande horizontale de peinture soigneusement passée au pinceau" is "materialized" in the painting hanging on the studio wall.

More than Le Palace, Histoire is structured by the associative power of writing. The claim that the two novels differ in so far as Le Palace is still impregnated with a certain amount of expressivity while Histoire allows a freer rein to the generative potential of writing is supported in the following remark by the author:

Mais c'est seulement en écrivant Histoire que  
j'ai commencé à avoir une conscience plus nette  
des pouvoirs et de la dynamique interne de  
l'écriture et à me laisser guider plus par ce  
que l'écriture disait - ou découvrait - que par  
ce que je voulais lui faire dire - ou "re-  
couvrir". 13

The descriptive framework in Histoire is one of hidden shift of context beneath an apparent continuity of the flow of writing. The following passage is at first set in the context of the narrator's holiday in Greece with Hélène:

Dans les parties du bassin où l'eau reflétait les feuillages sombres des lauriers où on voyait d'autres accumulées dans le fond vert-noir brunes visqueuses pourrissant les plus récentes rousses encore sépia collées ensemble par paquets minces pellicules de temps d'été mort invisibles dans la moitié du bac que remplissait le ciel les nuages éclatants mais après la découpe dentelée de la crête du buisson de lierre on pouvait distinguer nos images quelques unes floues comme si nous étions passés devant l'objectif emportés à toute vitesse Tu vas chez le coiffeur? (p.380)

The reflection of the "laurier" in the "bassin" evokes the earlier description (p.92) of the film developing session where the "lierre" is reflected in the "bac". Apart from the linguistic echo between the two scenes there is also a formal association between the visual "dédoublement" produced by the reflection of the "feuillages sombres des lauriers" on the surface of the water and the leaves at the bottom of the "bassin", and the narrator looking down at "nos images quelques unes floues" at the bottom of the "bac". A few lines later there is an equally hidden transition between two descriptions. The paragraph follows a "flashback" to the narrator's childhood, focussing on "l'égratignure séchée" on his knee after a fall:

les feuillages s'agitant de nouveau: en regardant bien on pouvait voir que chaque minuscule goutte de sang séché était *relie* à l'autre par des goutelettes encore plus petites microscopiques quelquefois un mince trait rouge: comme un fil de soie sur lequel on aurait fait des noeuds. (p.381)

The ironical "en regardant bien"<sup>14</sup> denotes a shift of context to the description of the design on the priest's robe near the start of the

novel:

taches de sang éparpillées sur la croix brodée  
parmi les petites feuilles sombres aigües elles  
aussi qui s'enroulaient au croisement des bandes  
formant une sorte de couronne autour du coeur  
rouge/. (p.15)

It is worth noting that all the above examples of shifts of scene are set off by a reference to a tree or foliage ("laurier", "lierre", "feuillages"). This is also a prominent feature in the global narrative frame as a whole: the novel begins with a reference "l'une d'elles"<sup>15</sup> to the branches of the tree (either an "acacia" (p.25) or a "lierre" (p.284)). A similar rôle is played by the pigeons in Le Palace and La Bataille de Pharsale.

During his discussion of Le Palace, Michel Deguy turns to Bergson's theory of memory for an explanation of the narrative perspective of the novel:

Bergson comparait la conscience à un jet d'eau dont le faisceau se scinderait par le haut en un flux protensif, qui s'incline vers l'imminent futur, et un flux réensif qui retombe sur le passé: que celui-là vienne à tarir et voici la conscience portée par la seule courbe réensive, autrement dit n'atteignant le présent que comme le passé, c'est-à-dire comme passé, comme du déjà-vécu; ainsi expliquait-il la "fausse reconnaissance". Tel romancier ici, ou, si l'on préfère, le narrateur qui parle dans Le Palace: un perpétuel paramnésique. On dirait que le site d'où il parle en voyant est ce point de séparation dont parlait Bergson: tout est déjà passé, tout est comme déjà vu.<sup>16</sup>

Our analysis of Histoire has introduced a modification (or even a logical extension) of Deguy's conclusion that the present in the novel is always conceived as "du déjà vécu". The descriptive framework of Histoire is based on a conception of text as "déjà écrit", where description is superimposed on description, and the "memory" or flux of writing acts as a generative force. The repetition of the tag

"réplique de l'originel" in the passage describing the items in the Greek museum (p.379) argues against the notion of art as representation of "reality" and supports the view that the "memory" of writing expresses itself in terms of superimposition of text. Simon directly referred to this aspect of his work at the 1974 Cerisy conference:

Simon: Lorsque donc Ricardou parle, comme l'autre jour et à juste titre, de conflit entre la dimension référentielle et la dimension scripturale, je me demande si l'on ne pourrait pas dire que dans la composition de la "dimension référentielle" entre déjà, pour une bonne part, une "dimension scripturale": l'ancienne et une nouvelle ...

Pugh: Je pensais que la gravure de Picasso reproduite dans Orion Aveugle, et qui semble décrite dans La Bataille de Pharsale, avait peut-être le sens symbolique que j'ai attribué ...

Simon: Vous voyez que l'espace "référentielle" est là encore constitué par un texte: un dessin LA7

The concept of intertextuality which, as we shall see in the following chapter, is at the heart of La Bataille de Pharsale and which is also apparent in embryo in Histoire (the fragments from Apuleius, Caesar, and John Reed's Ten Days that Shook the World), is a formal recognition of the concept of text as "déjà écrit".

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PART II

INTERTEXTUALITY

## Chapter One

### What is "Intertextuality"?

The importance of intertextuality in a poetics of modern fictional writing is confirmed by the fact that this concept has been evoked by a multitude of writers who have often ascribed different definitions to it. Yet there is still no book-length study exclusively devoted to establishing a common ground between the different descriptions. There is certainly not enough space for such a synthesis in the present chapter. However, by outlining the general scope of these definitions we will be able to situate Claude Simon's contribution to the concept within the current theoretical context.

Existing definitions of intertextuality range from the very specific (the presence of quotations in a given text) to the very general (the entire referential "field" alluded to by a given text). We can begin by considering the wide definition of intertextuality, as outlined by Jean Ricardou who sees the relationship between text and "world" (or "hors-texte") as a relationship between a given text and other texts which constitute culture and ideology:

Ce qu'on a tendance à penser sur tel point particulier comme rapport du texte au monde n'est pas autre chose, sur tel point particulier, qu'un rapport de complicité du texte à l'ensemble des textes dominants à une époque dite. [...] Ce qu'on appelle le monde n'est en effet que l'idée que s'en fait l'idéologie dominante selon la masse des textes officiellement actifs dans une société donnée. Le statut du hors-texte est donc celui d'un fantôme provisoire correspondant à un rapport d'intertextualité contrôlé par l'idéologie dominante. 1

The meaning of intertextuality here resembles that of "code".

Language does not have a "natural" plane of reference ("hors-texte"), but one which is composed of the multiple texts constituting the

dominant ideology.<sup>2</sup> Intertextuality is, therefore, present at every discourse. For Ricardou, intertextuality is an active, though inevitable, operation of writing. Julia Kristeva gives a similar definition of the concept:

Ainsi la structure du roman français au XVe siècle peut être considérée comme le résultat d'une transformation de plusieurs autres codes: la scolastique, la poésie courtoise, la littérature orale (publicitaire) de la ville, le carnaval. /.../ Nous appellerons intertextualité cette interaction textuelle qui se produit à l'intérieur d'un seul texte. Pour le sujet connaissant l'intertextualité est une notion qui sera l'indice de la façon dont un texte lit l'histoire et s'insère en elle. Le mode concret de réalisation de l'intertextualité dans un texte précis donnera la caractéristique majeure ("sociale", "esthétique") d'une structure textuelle. 3

For some critics, the roles are reversed: a given text is run through with the texts of several different ideologies:

La véritable "intertextualité" est celle qui en un texte, en un discours, est le rencontre de plusieurs textes, de plusieurs discours, de plusieurs codes, parfois de plusieurs idéologies. 4

Whether "active" or "passive", the definition of intertextuality made by Ricardou, Kristeva, and others, involves a view of the relationship between literature and "reality" as a relationship between text and text. The important point to note is that "reality" is viewed as text or multiplicity of texts. One can observe a close affinity here between intertextuality and "vraisemblance". Indeed Jonathan Culler has clearly underlined the existence of an association between the two concepts:

The "vraisemblable" is thus the basis of the important structuralist concept of "intertextualité": the relation of a particular text to other texts. 5



However, as we have noted at the start of this thesis,<sup>6</sup> Culler's view of this relationship is, within the context of modernity, inverted: since "reality" is conceived of as a text, it is intertextuality which forms the basis of the concept of "vraisemblance". Clearly the word "text" itself needs definition. Confusion can arise out of the fact that the same word is used with reference to a number of different phenomena ranging from "textbook" to "public opinion".<sup>7</sup> The important common denominator in the different uses of the word is that "text" refers to a product of language (whether verbal or visual) and which consequently, like all signs, possesses no intrinsic, natural status or, to borrow from Merleau-Ponty,<sup>8</sup> "anchorage" in reality. One can infer from this argument that the specific meaning of intertextuality underlies its wider extension.

What, then, is the specific meaning? Intertextuality is the relationship between two or more fictional (or literary) texts. Two problems immediately arise out of this definition. What form does this relationship take? Do both texts have to be literary? If we turn to Laurent Jenny's, in many respects excellent, article on La Bataille de Pharsale and intertextuality, we will see that the two questions are not unrelated. Jenny argues that the intertextual fragments (or quotations) in La Bataille de Pharsale are always "narrativement motivés"<sup>9</sup> and that they consequently remain dominated by the "texte centreur"<sup>10</sup> or main narrative. Jenny contrasts this use of intertextuality with the technique of "cut-ups" practised by William Burroughs which creates a "montage non isotope" defined by the critic in the following way:

Montage non isotope: un fragment textuel  
est inséré dans un contexte sans aucun  
rapport sémantique a priori avec lui. On

en chercherait en vain un exemple dans La Bataille de Pharsale où tous les éléments, malgré les apparences, s'avèrent fortement motivés et groupés autour de quelques axes sémantiques restreintes.<sup>11</sup>

An obvious objection is that there surely can be no a priori association between the narrative in La Bataille de Pharsale and, for instance, Elie Faure's Histoire de l'Art. A more fundamental criticism, however, is that his analysis treats the text as an object independent of the reader's participation. This perspective is created by identifying intertextuality solely as quotation. Jenny goes on to attack Simon because, he says, the quotations in the novels are always fragments of literary texts (once again, contrary to Burrough's "cut-ups" which are composed of fragments of advertisement, newspaper clippings and so on).<sup>12</sup> Jenny's inability to distinguish between the intertextual value of a piece of advertisement and a fragment from Iroust's novel is simply due to the critic's restricted view of intertextuality as quotation. This narrow definition of the concept only refers to the syntagmatic or "surface" level of the novel in question. Thus in La Bataille de Pharsale the different fragments are juxtaposed to form the mosaic of the novel. Intertextuality here resembles collage. We shall return to this aspect of the concept in the following chapter. But there is another way in which two or more texts can be intertextually related.

Jean Ricardou has outlined two types of intertextual activity: "intertextualité restreinte" which is the relationship between different works by the same author (or "scripteur") and "intertextualité générale" which is the relationship between works by different authors.<sup>13</sup> Examples of both types abound. There are two pages in Hobbe-Grillet's Topologie d'une cité fantôme where "intertextualité restreinte" is particularly active. Taken on its own, the passage

is irrevocably discontinuous, being composed of a set of unrelated sentences and paragraphs. However, set against this syntagmatic discontinuity, the associations produced by the intertextual play of the text offers a different kind of continuity. The section entitled "Dans la nature pétrifiée" (pp.136-8) includes an evocation of La Jalousie in the reference to the "bruissement invisible des insectes qui crissent de tous les côtés à la fois", and in "On lit des vieux romans démodés qui se passent au fond de l'Afrique fantôme, pleins de drames psychologiques incompréhensibles dans la chaleur moite et la stridulation des criquets". There is also a repetition of the opening line from "Trois Visions Réfléchies" in Instantanés: "La cafetière est sur la table". Le Voyeur is implicitly evoked in "On a volé la bicyclette du voyeur. C'est un ancien vélo d'homme abandonné dans la bergerie (on l'a toujours vu là) et qui s'appelle comme ça depuis une histoire horrible qu'on a inventé à son sujet." Finally, Projet pour une révolution à New York is indirectly referred to in the last paragraph of the section: "Il y a ensuite comme d'habitude, un escalier vertigineux et un long couloir, avec du sang qui passe sous la porte d'une chambre fermée à clef."

"Intertextualité générale" has always been a prominent feature of European literature from the Renaissance onwards, reaching a peak of intensity in the works of T.S.Eliot, Ezra Pound and James Joyce.<sup>16</sup> The "nouveaux romanciers" have followed in this tradition: there is an intertextual link between Ollier's Enigma and Flaubert's Salammbô, as well as between La Mise en Scène and Bouvard et Pécuchet;<sup>17</sup> there is also an association between Butor's 6,810,000 litres d'eau par seconde and Chateaubriand's Voyage en Amérique; equally, there is a relationship between Robbe-Grillet's earlier novels and those of

Graham Greene.<sup>19</sup> Claude Simon's La Bataille de Pharsale, as we shall see in the following chapter, is one of the most intertextually active of "nouveaux romans".

The question, however, as to the exact nature of an intertextual relation still needs answering. One form of intertextuality is parody, as in the case of the relationship between the novels of Robbe-Grillet and Graham Greene. But, as Jenny notes, "si la parodie est toujours intertextuelle, l'intertextualité ne se réduit pas à la parodie".<sup>20</sup> A second form of intertextual association is the use of quotation to support a point of view expressed in the main text. Philippe Sollers, for instance, warns against this reading of the intertextual fragments in Nombres:

J'insiste sur le fait qu'il ne s'agit pas de citations: une citation est une sorte d'insigne qu'un auteur arbore comme autorité afin de mieux fonder la valeur de ce qu'il dit: cela se passe entre un nom et un nom. Alors qu'ici, nous sommes dans un milieu - physique, électronique, chimique, biologique - anonyme. Les guillemets annoncent seulement un redoublement historique du texte. Les jonctions ont lieu à la fois au niveau signifiant (phonique) et au niveau signifié (conceptuel, idéologique).<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the choice of the particular texts acts as a form of homage to writers with whom he feels a certain affinity:

Cependant, il y a un choix très précis: la plupart des textes appartiennent à un espace occulté par notre culture et, en général, matérialiste [...]. Le point commun de tous ces acteurs est d'avoir été déformés ou refusés par le système chrétien: ainsi Bruno, Spinoza, Artaud [...]. C'est un hommage rendu à un certain "enfer" de notre pensée.<sup>22</sup>

A third type of intertextuality is based on a transformation of one text by another. For Laurent Jenny, the transformational aspect of intertextuality is what distinguishes it from mere influence:

l'intertextualité désigne non pas une addition confuse et mystérieuse d'influences, mais le travail de transformation et d'assimilation de plusieurs textes opérés par un texte centreur qui garde le leadership du sens. 23

Transformation is here placed in a strictly social context. The critic thus attaches greater importance to the intertextual activity of William Burroughs's novels which is mainly aimed at subverting the "totalitarisme des média". In other words, the texts which are being transformed are not literary:

Il s'agit de bricoler en hâte des "techniques" de mises en pièces pour répondre à l'omniprésence des émetteurs qui nous nourrissent de leur discours mort (mass média, publicité etc...) Il faut faire déliner les codes / 24

Ricardou, on the other hand, does focus on intertextuality as transformation of literary texts, calling this process "anti-pastiche":

En outre, il y a dans La Frise de Constantinople ce que j'appelle des antipastiches. Des textes d'historiens sont bien injectés mais ils sont transformés par le texte qui les reçoit, tout au niveau du style qu'au niveau des événements eux-mêmes par une manière d'assimilation. 25

At the 1971 Cerisy conference, Butor's work came under attack from Robbe-Grillet, Ollier, and Ricardou for not being sufficiently iconoclastic. Butor nevertheless echoes the desire for transformation by stressing the inventive aspect of modern writing, although coupling it with its corollary activity of "restitution".

Restitution du texte ancien, invention du texte nouveau sont deux actions corrélatives. Plus je restitue, plus je suis forcé d'inventer (et encouragé dans cette aventure); plus j'invente, plus je suis capable de restituer.

La littérature courante ne mérite donc même pas le nom de parodie. En effet le modèle ancien n'a pas pu être consulté recouvert par ses imitations innombrables, il n'est pas sorti du rayon. Ombres des ombres d'ombres. 26

Elsewhere, Butor states that Chateaubriand's text did not serve as

a "citation" in 6,810,000 litres d'eau par seconde but as a "matière première." <sup>27</sup> Finally, we can note the comparison which Simon has made between the process of intertextual transformation operated in La Bataille de Pharsale and a similar operation in the collage work of Robert Rauschenberg:

Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon: Et en utilisant ces textes, les transformez-vous?  
Claude Simon: Bien sûr et Rauschenberg aussi en utilisant des reproductions ou des chromos ou des foulards, il les transforme . <sup>28</sup>

In conclusion, we may note that the different types of intertextuality so far elucidated in this chapter have been totally "objective", allowing very little scope for an active participation on the part of the reader. One must accept, however, that (at the other end of the critical spectrum) giving complete freedom to the reader will result in a totally "subjective" interpretation of the text. Thus the "cross-section" between La Bataille de Pharsale and Lampedusa's The Leopard, as described by John Fletcher, <sup>29</sup> lacking any specific textual corroboration, is not an example of intertextuality but simply one of comparison. Neither "objective" nor "subjective", the originality of Simon's work lies in the fact that it opens up a new horizon of intertextual signification, the existence of which depends as much on the reader as on the texts involved. The following chapter presents a description of this new type of intertextuality with special reference to the triptych relationship between La Bataille de Pharsale, La Jalousie, and A la recherche du temps perdu. But in order to appreciate fully the significance of intertextuality in Simon's work, we must first situate it within the context of the focus on narrative framework discussed in part I of this thesis.

For this reason part II, chapter two begins with an analysis of the relationship between intertextuality and perspective.

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## Chapter Two

### La Bataille de Pharsale and its Fragments.

#### 1. Intertextuality and perspective.

Quoting Ten Doesschate, Stephen Heath describes the Quattrocento view of perspective in the following way:

"It is the art of depicting three-dimensional objects upon a plane surface in such a manner that the picture may effect the eye of an observer in the same way as the natural objects themselves [...]. A perfectly deceptive illusion can be obtained only on two conditions: (a) the spectator shall use only one eye, (b) this eye has to be placed in the central point of perspective (or, at least, quite near to this point)." The component elements of that account should be noted: the possible exact match for the eye of picture and object, the deceptive illusion; the centre of the illusion, the eye in place. What is fundamental is the idea of the spectator at a window, an "aperta finestra" that gives a view on the world: framed, centred, harmonious (the "istoria").<sup>1</sup>

Traditional perspective relies, therefore, on a single point of fixed centrality from which the painting and the scene represented in it may be viewed. The "observer" of the painting thus has no freedom to perceive the painting from any angle other than the one from which it was painted. In fiction, perspective is created by the narrative and most openly (though not necessarily most effectively) by a narrator. The latter can be used as a fixed point of convergence between author and reader as far as the interpretation of the content of the narrative is concerned. However, the potential of intimacy between author and reader can also be abused and the reader can find himself scandalously deceived by such narrators as the one in Vladimir Nabokov's Pale Fire or in Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd. In the novels of Claude Simon, the "undoing" of narrative perspective



is not caused by the author deceiving the reader, but by the disintegration of the narrator's identity. The development from la Route des Flandres to la Bataille de Pharsale concentrates on the gradual expulsion from the text of the "point fixe" of narratorial perspective with the result that the reader is left with a direct perception of the patterns and combinations of memory. In Les Corps conducteurs, the framework of memory itself disappears.

Linked with the concept of "frame" is that of "screen". It is the latter concept which forms the hinge-point between intertextuality and perspective. Heath defines "screen" by alluding to Leonardo da Vinci's famous essay treating the canvas as a pane of glass standing upright between the painter (and observer) and the scene or object being painted:

The pane is at once a frame, the frame of a window, and a screen, the area of projection on which what is seen can be traced and fixed; from the Quattrocento on, the "pane" delimits and holds a view, the painter's canvas a screen situated between eye and object, point of interception of the light rays. It is worth noting, indeed, in Renaissance (and post-Renaissance) painting, the powerful attraction of the window as theme, the fascination with the rectangle of tamed light, the luminously defined space of vision. 2

There are two ways in which intertextuality can subvert this conception of perspective. Firstly, the view of text as reflection of "reality" is undermined by intertextuality in so far as the referential level is always shown to be composed of another text. Secondly, the "screen" of reflection is itself not unified but composed of a multiplicity of surfaces, or intertextual fragments. With intertextuality, the concept of novel as mirror-space, or screen is transformed into one of novel as mosaic or collage. Simon has himself identified intertextuality with collage, thus underlining the fractured,

multiform nature of the "surface" of a novel like La Bataille de Pharsale:

You are also familiar with what artists call constructions or collages. Picasso invented the genre, and he has been followed by such outstanding figures as Schwitter and Rauschenberg. Lately, literature has also produced collages, or what we call "intertextuality". I experimented with this in Histoire and La Bataille de Pharsale. 3

However, the mosaic nature of textual "surface" is not restricted to the play of intertextuality. Any text may be composed of an assemblage of disconnected parts. The use of italics in La Bataille de Pharsale gives a visual outline of this fragmented "surface". The first appearance of italics is worth examining since although the passage is not itself an example of intertextuality, it throws light on the relationship between intertextuality and perspective in the novel as a whole. In this example, the Faulknerian use of italics depicts a switch in the narrative. The flash-back thus presents the italicized lines as fragments of memory. The narrator as a schoolboy is being scolded by his uncle Charles for not preparing his Latin homework:

Eaux mortes. Mort vivant. Je comprends parfaitement que tu aies décidé de ne rien faire naturellement c'est de ta part purement et simplement une question de paresse mortellement triste mais après tout quoique tu ne puisses pas encore le savoir Je ne savais pas encore puisque c'est aussi une chose qu'il faut apprendre et qu'apparemment tu as pris la ferme résolution de ne rien faire bois mort feuille morte mais peut-être as-tu raison après tout tout savoir ne débouche jamais que sur un autre savoir et les mots sur d'autres mots la mort dans l'âme la peine de mort [...] je ne savais [...] pas encore fantômes aussi mais pisseux sur une autre presque effacée prise sans doute à la sortie d'un de ces bacs de Quatz Arts [.] 4

Firstly, to set the passage in its context, one must pinpoint the generative capacity of the word "mètre" which, under the impulse of

the metro exit passage defined by Ricardou as a "bloc transitaire" <sup>5</sup> maintains the textual relationship with the Valéry exergue ("M'as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée"). "Métro" which is an anagram of "morte" thus generates a whole series of different avenues of textual development through the motif of death. "Métro" is also a pun on "mettre eau" ("Eaux mortes" linking up with "chasses d'eau" (p.16) and with stagnation, a variation of the death motif), and a pun on "mettre O" which leads to the motif of circularity and repetition, and, as we shall see later, to the introduction of O as the sign of the vacant locus of narratorial identity. Secondly, through synecdochic association with "métro" ("la bouche du métro" (p.14)), the word "débouche" links back to the motif of death in the description of the soldier with an arrow piercing his mouth. But the uncle's comment that all knowledge leads to more knowledge and all words to more words is a recognition of intertextuality: all texts lead to more texts. Thirdly, still under the impulse of "débouche", our attention is drawn to the narrative framework of the novel. As has already been said, the framework of articulation is presented as an act of memory. Just as in La Route des Flandres, the very first few lines of the novel describe the momentary flash of remembering, "un instant puis lumière ou plutôt remémoration (avertissement?) rappel des ténèbres" (p.9). The reason for the choice of memory as the narrative framework of all of Simon's novels which were published in the sixties (La Route des Flandres, Le Palace, Histoire, La Bataille de Pharsale) can be found in the following description of memory which appears in Histoire:

l'oeil non pas voit mais bien plutôt se souvient  
non de la fatidique succession (ou suite , ou  
énumération) de parties - chevelure, épaules,

seins, hanches etc... - dans leur ordre monotone, mais d'une combinaison, d'un ombreux et fulgurant enchevêtrement de lumineux et de lignes où les éléments éclatés, dissociés se regroupent selon le foisonnant et rigoureux désordre de la mémoire / 76

The choice of memory as fulfilling the rôle of narrative framework in these novels can, therefore, be specifically related to its combinatory character. However, this framework, which is more or less undisturbed in the preceding novels, undergoes a certain transformation in La Bataille de Pharsale where memory itself is shown to be influenced by intertextuality:

une voûte chuintante comme dans ce tableau  
vu où? (p.9)  
comme sur cette image du livre de catéchisme  
/ ... / je me rappelle (p.15)  
Dans l'Enéide ou quoi (p.17)  
Me rappelant l'endroit: environ dans le premier  
tiers en haut d'une page de droite. Pouvais  
ainsi réciter des tartines de vers pourvu que  
je réussisse à me figurer la page et où dans  
la page (p.20)

We may summarize our reading of the initial italicized passage in La Bataille de Pharsale in the following four points. Firstly, there is a shift in point of view, since it is no longer the narrator but uncle Charles who is speaking. There is also a narrative shift in time. Secondly, we have noted the visual effect of the graphical interchange between italics and Roman type. In both cases, the discontinuity reflects the collage aspect of the presence of intertextual fragments fracturing the "screen" or "surface" of the novel. Thirdly, despite the typographical and narrative switches, the italicized passage is submitted to the same semantic and paronomastic chain of generation as the rest of the text by means of the "signifiant" "mètre" and its "synecdochic subsidiary", "bouche", which, through association by pun, metaphor, and anagram, run the passage through the

same dominant nodal motif of death. (Simon himself, borrowing from Jacques Lacan, speaks of "noeuds de signification".) <sup>7</sup> Fourthly, the referential aspect of memory, serving as narrative framework, is shown to have an intertextual nature. In these last two cases, the effect of continuity reflects the associative nature of intertextuality as a "trans-literary" activity.

Our analysis so far shows that, with reference to Simon's novel, the concept of intertextuality operates on two registers: intertextuality as collage (the presence of intertextual fragments or quotations, whether in italics or in Roman type, fracturing the "screen" of the text); and intertextuality as an inter-frame activity (the associations produced by a reading which transgressed the borders of different literary works.) We have so far only been considering what may be termed "scriptural intertextuality" (the term "scriptural" being more appropriate than "literary" since this form of intertextuality, especially with regard to the first register, is not restricted to literary works but involves all forms of writing). However, La Bataille de Pharsale is equally influenced by the workings of another form of intertextuality which we may term "pictorial". Once again both the narrative frame and the linearity of narrative are disrupted by intertextual play. In the first case, as in the example already quoted, the referential level of memory is shown to be influenced by pictorial intertextuality ("comme dans ce tableau vu ou?" (p.9)). Secondly, linearity is interrupted by sudden "narratively unmotivated" descriptions of paintings and photographs. The difference between scriptural and pictorial intertextuality is, clearly, that the latter is not composed of quotations and therefore, on the level of "screen", is not directly present in the text but

always indirectly present in the form of descriptions. Unlike Orion aveugle, there are no photographs or reproductions in La Bataille de Pharsale only descriptions of photographs and paintings. This dual form of intertextuality ("scriptural" and "pictorial") reflects a more generalized tension between language and vision which is manifest throughout the novel. One such example can be found in the passage we have been examining. Uncle Charles is criticizing his nephew for not studying hard enough:

par conséquent il faudra au moins que tu puisses  
articuler de façon à peu près intelligible le  
mot chemise et le mot pantalon ou bien te résigner  
à t'exprimer simplement au moyen de gestes [.] (p.19)

The same tension is later expressed in the form of pictograms which appear in the text (pp.15,16,18,21). The pictograms, however, are not to be taken as a resolution of the tension but simply, together with the frequent use of capital letters, lines of Greek, and italics, as an expression of the tension as well as a reminder of the materiality of writing.<sup>8</sup>

Having outlined the basic characteristics of intertextuality and the registers in which they operate in the novel, we can now turn our attention to the relationship between intertextuality and the narrative framework of La Bataille de Pharsale.

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## 2. Patterns: from binary to ternary.

The narrative perspective in La Bataille de Pharsale is heavily influenced by the triptych structure which organizes the formal composition of the novel. It must have seemed strange to readers of La Route des Flandres, Le Palace and La Bataille de Pharsale to hear Claude Simon's remark at the 1974 Cerisy conference about the

original model for Triptyque:

La-dessus, à l'automne 1971, a eu lieu à Paris la grande rétrospective de Francis Bacon dont non seulement la peinture m'a fortement impressionné, mais dont certaines oeuvres avaient pour titre Triptyque, titre et principe que j'ai trouvés en eux-mêmes tellement excitants que j'ai décidé d'adjoindre à mes deux premières séries une troisième, celle de la station balnéaire, inspirée d'ailleurs elle-même par des toiles de Bacon. 9

Indeed the idea of the triptych would appear to stem back through Le Vent ("Tentative de reconstruction d'un retable baroque") to Simon's first novel, Le Tricheur, where the first three chapters are recounted by different characters and at different moments in time, and where the fourth and final chapter is itself broken into three parts each of which with a different narrator. The model here, it would seem, is Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury with its triptych of narratives by Benjy, Quentin and Jason.<sup>10</sup> But we are now being led into considerations of influence which are not always synonymous with intertextuality. The triptych structure of La Bataille de Pharsale though not modelled on the Faulknerian switch of narrative point of view, is no less emphatic.<sup>11</sup> Each of the novel's three parts has a separate title and exergue: "Achille immobile à grands pas" with the Valéry stanza serving as exergue; "Lexique" with a passage from Froust; "Chronologie des événements" with a passage from Heidegger. The relevance of the structure is not thematic, however, but formal. Part one is not a thematic expansion of Le Cimetière Marin; part two offers no definition of terms as suggested by the title; the title of part three could be interpreted as an ironic denial of the conclusive or explanatory tendencies, whether thematic or formal, of the final section of most novels including, as we have just noted, The Sound

and the Fury and Le Tricheur. What, therefore, is the significance of the novel's triptych structure and how does this relate to the play of intertextuality? To answer this question satisfactorily we must begin with a brief inventory.

The dominant feature of part one of La Bataille de Pharsale is the mixture of the different forms of intertextuality. There are several italicized quotations such as the fragments from Proust (pp.22,84,85),

a Latin school textbook (pp.26,27,30,33,41,43,59,90,94), and a passage from Apuleius's L'Ane d'Or (p.92). There are also four instances of non-italicized fragments of intertextuality all of which are taken from A la recherche du temps perdu (pp.20,38,90,93). The remaining italicized fragments are instances of narrative shift (pp.18,57,67,72,73,74-5,80,88). Instances of pictorial intertextuality include an unnamed painting of a naval combat already mentioned (p.9), a postcard reproduction of Amour et Psyché (p.46), and a cartoon strip (p.65).

Part two differs from parts one and three in that it is broken up into seven sections or "lexiques": "Bataille", "César", "Conversation", "Guerrier", "Machine", "Voyage", "O". "Bataille" contains italicized fragments from the Latin textbook (pp.102,105,107,120,121), Proust (p.104), and Elie Faure's Histoire de l'Art (p.119). There are also several italicized instances of narrative shift (pp.102,104,106,107, 109,110-2,113-6). There are no references to specific paintings or painters other than Caravaggio (p.118), but there are several descriptions of the act of painting. The following four sections contain no intertextual fragments at all whether in italics or not, whether pictorial or scriptural. "Voyage", however, contains a mixture of intertextual variation with a predominance of pictorial intertextuality.



There is a description of della Francesca's "Défaite de Chosroës" (p.153), a photograph of Proust (p.158), the photographs of Landru (p.159), a comparison of the treatment of space in the paintings of Poussin, della Francesca, and Ucello (p.160), a description of "Les Dernières Cartouches" (p.166)(identified by Stuart Sykes as being a "vacuous painting by Alphonse de Neuville"<sup>12</sup>), and a comparison of the noise content in the work of Bruegel, della Francesca, and Poussin (p.171). Italicized quotations include a passage from a glossy magazine on the first world war (p.157), a passage from Histoire de l'Art (pp.173-4), and fragments from Proust (pp.168,169,170,171,178). There are also three instances of non-italicized fragments from Proust (pp.155,158, 181). The appearance of italics on pages 168-9 denotes a spatio-temporal shift to a moment in the narrative described in "Conversation".

The most striking aspect of part three is the absence of all italics. Non-italicized intertextual pieces include two fragments of Proust's novel (pp.203-6), two sentences from Plutarch inserted within a sequence in which the narrator is translating from Latin (pp.235-6), and a passage from a travel brochure placing Pharsale in its geographical context (pp.242). The instances of pictorial intertextuality are two descriptions of an Italian banknote with a picture of Verdi (pp.193, 258), a description of a postcard reproduction of Louis Cranach's "La Jalousie" (p.228), and one of Pieter Bruegel's "Bataille des Israélites et des Philistins" (pp.228-9), a German banknote with a picture of Erasmus or Dürer (p.229), Italian banknotes with Julius Caesar's head "en filigrane" (p.234), a description of two bronze statues outside the Belgrade parliament (p.241), an anonymous painting of lovers embraced(p.254), the embossed sides of an English penny (p.258), a description of a sculpture of lovers embracing one

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another (pp.266-8), and, finally, a postcard detail from della Francesca's "Défaite de Chosroës" showing the trumpet player (p.268).

If nothing else, this dry inventory points out the unusual frequency of intertextual moments in La Bataille de Pharsale, the main result of which is the relentless break-up of linear narrative. What, therefore, is it that motivates the novel's structure? The term "motivation", borrowed from Merleau-Ponty,<sup>13</sup> is to be taken to mean here the generative activity of the dominant motifs which form the skeletal structure of the novel. The following lines from Ricardou are particularly relevant to part one of Simon's novel:

lumière, ombre, immobilité, mouvement: les  
allusions à la strophe de Valéry sont trop  
nettes pour ne pas désigner ici une manière  
de lire. <sup>14</sup>

Light and dark, immobility and movement are not to be considered so much as separate themes but as variants of the motif of antithesis or alternation stemming, as Ricardou shows, from the Valéry exergue with its "vole [...] et qui ne vole pas", "le soleil [...] quel ombre de tortue", and "Achille immobile à grands pas". It is as a reminder of this point of departure that the oft repeated "jaune et puis noir temps d'un battement de paupières et puis jaune de nouveau" recurs at moments of complete narratorial deadlock, what Ricardou calls "aporie". <sup>15</sup>

et peu après il n'eut plus que du bleu je  
souffrais comme ...  
alors?  
tu as raison ça ne mène à rien on va revenir  
d'ou on était partis peut-être que cette fois  
on  
Jaune puis noir puis jaune de nouveau (p.40)

The immobility/movement antithesis is also repeated throughout the first part of the novel mainly through the vehicle of the "métro"

sequences:

Immobilés d'abord, entraînés par le même mouvement ascensionnel et continu qui semble les ramener du sein de la terre, puis prenant pied sur le trottoir et s'éloignant dans différentes directions apparaissent successivement à sa suite (p.14)

and its variants such as the catechism book reproduction:

cette image du catéchisme où l'on pouvait voir une longue procession ascendante de personnages immobiles figés /.../ (p.15)

The description of the reflection of the drifting cloud in the window above the square where the narrator is keeping watch on the two lovers is stamped with the same paradox:

la forme boursouflée du nuage se faufilant d'un vantail à l'autre pour ainsi dire en se contorsionnant sur la surface inégale du verre, glissant et disparaissant, l'image reflétée de la façade d'angle, balcons, fenêtres, sinueuse aussi, comme ces reflets dans l'eau. Mais immobile. Les mailles du rideau immobiles aussi. /.../ (p.11)

The antithetical disposition of part one is also revealed in an oxymoron like "mort vivant" (p.18) or a paradox such as "oreille qui peut voir" (p.23). But the perspective of alternation, which as a formal concept can be described as a variant of binarism, does not surface until the end of part one where each short paragraph is alternately narrated in the present and past tenses.

maintenant il n'y a plus de pigeons /.../  
il n'y avait plus personne non plus dans  
le champ /.../  
la terrasse du café est déserte /.../  
la chatte blanche n'était plus perchée /.../  
un nuage se reflète de nouveau /.../ [...]  
toutes les tables peintes en bleu rangées à  
l'extérieur du café sur l'étroit trottoir  
étaient maintenant entourées d'hommes /.../  
est-ce qu'il y avait vraiment un terrain de  
football comment aurait-il pu y en avoir /.../  
je peux me rappeler /.../

Un couple est venu s'asseoir à la terrasse  
[...] Le couple ne présente rien de  
particulier [.] (pp.95-98)

The result of this alternation is the juxtaposition of two separate narrative sequences: the urban scene of the square with the metro exit and café (narrated in the present tense), juxtaposed with the sequence (narrated in the past tense) of the rural scene somewhere in Greece, with the narrator searching for the field on which the battle of Pharsalus was fought. However, the reader cannot take great comfort in identifying this pattern since no sooner has the text set up laws of its own production than it contradicts them thus throwing the reader back into his initial state of inability to "control" what he is reading. The passage beginning "un âne gris" (p.96) which is narrated in the present tense refers to the sequence in which the narrator is driving in the Greek countryside and thus contradicts the pattern where it is on all other occasions in the past tense. Structure, therefore, is governed by textual motivation and not by narrative considerations. In the passage we are now examining there are at least three "intersequential motivators" or hinge-points which "justify" or "explain" the shift from one narrative context to the next. Ricardou has rightly shown the generative impulse of the word "jaune" and the repetitive function of the "bloc transitaire":

Par la patiente redite de deux événements simultanés, le dressage fait en sorte que l'un des deux, ensuite proposé seul, suscite automatiquement l'idée de l'autre. En somme s'agit-il à partir d'une dualité répétée, de produire un tout à deux faces, c'est-à-dire d'inventer et d'apprendre un signe [.] Motivé, on l'a vu, de mainte manière, le rapprochement associe le nuage à la scène

de la place, en contrebas. 16

The passage we are at present considering contains an example of the textual activity described by Ricardou: the shift to the metro sequence is triggered off by the mention of the word "nuage":

au-dessus des collines pierreuses un nuage  
bas s'allonge se teintant de rose  
les ~~gens~~ continuent toujours à sortir du  
métro /.../ (p.96)

The associated reference to clouds and the square, therefore, is one element governing the juxtaposition of the paragraphs. Another "motivator" is the anagrammatical potential of the word "jaune" for the indication of which we are once again indebted to Jean Ricardou. The final words of the paragraph preceding the lines just quoted are; "et se remet à mâcher un chardon jauni". The chain of association, therefore, is as follows: "jauni" - "nuage" - metro sequence.

These last few paragraphs of part one are, however, motivated in a more general way through their relationship with the start of the novel where the metro sequence first appears. It is through the naming of colours that the association (the two couplings: grey and pink, and grey and blue) is made. The first grouping appears in a description of two pigeons on the pavement, "gris à pattes roses" (p.10), and ~~the second describes~~ the reflection of the sky in the window on the fifth floor, "les larges mailles du rideau de filet derrière la vitre plus visibles dans la partie gris sombre que dans la bande remplie par le bleu clair" (p.11). These two couplings repeatedly intermingle in the final pages of part one:

Dans les parties ombrées les collines se  
teintaient de bleu (p.94)  
un camion à moitié chargé de blocs roses  
/.../ recouverts d'une couche de poussière  
grisâtre (p.95)

l'asphalte mouillé a séché il est d'un gris  
terne (p.95)  
la terrasse du café est déserte le garçon en  
tablier bleu (p.95)  
un âne gris (p.96)  
nuage bas s'allonge se teintant de rose (p.96)  
je vis une des trois poules au cou décharné  
rose mais pas les deux autres (p.96)  
le ciel reflété est maintenant très foncé le  
nuage en paraît d'autant plus éclatant (p.97)  
toutes les tables peintes en bleu (p.97)<sup>17</sup>

The pattern is as follows: grey/blue, pink/grey, grey, blue, grey, pink, pink, grey, blue. No hidden symbolic meaning is being suggested here, simply a foregrounding of the interweaving thread of the three colours, like the trumpet sound continually "se répondant, se répercutant" and producing a pattern of signification in which blue tends to be the dominant colour of the urban, metro sequence, and pink the dominant colour in the Greek, rural sequence. It is striking that all the other colours mentioned in these paragraphs, apart from "jauni" whose special role we have already noted, are indirectly related to the pattern outlined: "rouge" is a variant of "rose"; "noir" and "blanc", describing the eyes of the grey donkey, are the two constituent parts of "gris"; white is mentioned only in a remark on its absence, "pas de chatte blanche: peut-être sur ce poteau" (p.97). Yet again, however, once an outline of a pattern emerges, the reader stumbles across a flagrant contradiction produced by the "force disruptive de la description".<sup>18</sup> The paragraph beginning "toutes les tables peintes en bleu" would at first appear to be another description of the café in the urban sequence, as is signalled by the blue tables. A dilemma arises, however, when as one reads on one discovers that the sequence is being narrated in the past tense, "[les tables] étaient maintenant entourées d'hommes assis je remarquai<sup>19</sup>." The use

of the shifter "maintenant" coming straight after the shock of the unexpected tense in "étaient" ironically indicates that the opposition implied in the statement is not a temporal ("now" as opposed to the last time I saw the tables) but a textual opposition between this sequence in which the narrator drives past a café in Greece, and the sequence describing the café in the square which is set in the urban sequence. In other words, the opposition is between the "pink sequence" and the "blue sequence" with the inadvertent reader being momentarily confused by the former sequence borrowing from the latter. It is by way of recognition of this interchange that the otherwise inexplicable last line of the paragraph makes a seemingly non-sequitur statement: "Il n'y avait pas de marchand de journaux". The reference is to the description, two paragraphs back, of the news-vendor by the metro exit in the "blue sequence". The irony here reflects the disturbing "trompe l'oeil" effect caused by a transgression within the binary system: the two contexts are intermingled. The last paragraph continues in this ironic tone with the description of a man and a woman who come to sit at a table in the café. There is no mention of colour. Instead the final words of this section of the novel self-consciously refer to the binary pattern which has formally dominated throughout the chapter:

Le couple ne présente rien de particulier. (p.98)

As we have seen, part two is broken up into seven sections, four of which contain no intertextual fragments at all. In fact neither does the final section, "O", but the special case of this section along with "Bataille" and "Voyage" will be looked at shortly. The segmented format of part two provides a basis for the continuation of the



dualist perspective of alternation which we have just been examining in connection with part one. In addition to the alternation of tense, there is also an alternation of first and third person narratives between the four consecutive sections:

- "César": First person narrative, past tense.  
"Me rappelant cette arrivée..."(p.122)
- "Conversation": Third person narrative, present tense.  
"Elle dit /.../ Il dit..."(p.128)
- "Guerrier": First person narrative, past tense.  
"Il faisait tourner /.../ et nous muets..." (p.135)
- "Machine": Third person narrative, present tense.  
"une chaîne /.../ se dirige" (p.147)

In contrast, the striking aspect of both "Bataille" and "Voyage" is the profusion of italicized quotations, the polyphony of different narrative voices, the ceaseless break-up of linearity and continuity. The discontinuity of these two sections is made visual by the widespread presence of italics. The intertextual fragment is thus manifestly "foreign", its "otherness" stands out against the novel's own narrative. Paradoxically, in both sections the fragments are linked thematically or rather by a common "signifié", since the word "theme" implies a fundamental association which is not always the case. All the italicized passages in "Bataille" are linked by the notion of "war": descriptions of the battle of Pharsalus itself, descriptions of combat in the second world war, paintings of battle scenes. Even a fragment from Elie Faure on art refers to the same motif:

le massacre aussi bien que l'amour est un  
prétexte à glorifier la forme dont la  
splendeur calme apparaît seulement à  
ceux qui ont pénétré l'indifférence de la  
nature devant le massacre et l'amour. (p.119)

The italicized passages in "Voyage" are also threaded together by

their "lexique" which in this case is the citing of place names: Sarajevo, Marrakech, and the distortion of Proust's title, "Sodome et Gonbhorée". Another passage from A la recherche du temps perdu extends the scope of the motif of "travel" further:

lumière qui éclaire le spectacle de la terre  
c'était le fragment d'un autre monde d'une  
planète inconnue une vue de / (p.170)

Another variant of the same motif is the reference to different nationalities: the phrase borrowed from an English art critic defining the baroque as "movement into space" (p.160); the Italian novel titles FORZA DEL DESTINO and LA POTENZA E LA GLORIA (p.173); and Elie Faure's reference to the German Renaissance painters:

tout pour l'artiste allemand est au même plan  
dans la nature le détail masque toujours  
l'ensemble leur univers n'est pas continu  
mais faits de fragments juxtaposés / (p.174)

Thus one may say that there exists in both sections an antithetical relationship between the fragmentation of the syntagmatic level of the text (in other words, the disruption of linearity) and the integrative activity on the paradigmatic level (in other words, the dominating motifs of, respectively, "bataille" and "voyage"). This pattern is reversed in part three where there are no italicized passages with the result that the intertextual fragments are, visually at least, integrated with the novel while there is an absence of any one unifying motif or "lexique" motivating the text. For the moment, however, we must return to our analysis of the binary pattern underlying the novel's composition. The final pages of "Bataille" resemble the ending of part one in the insistent repetition of the dual pattern, as in the following paradox involving immobility and movement:

le cheval galopant sur place oscillant d'avant  
en arrière sans avancer empêtré dans les corps / (p.116)

Similarly, there is a staccato alternation between descriptions of a representation of a battle and descriptions of lovemaking which are set off by the quotation from Elie Faure already mentioned in which "massacre" and "amour" are presented as a pair. However, the alternation between the two sequences is unlike the alternation between the "pink" and "blue" sequences at the end of part one in that there are fragments of other descriptions, such as the description of the people emerging from the metro exit, which intervene between them. More significantly, the lovemaking sequence is itself "dédoublé" since in one case the male partner is not the narrator, "maintenant elle entoure ses épaules de ses bras" (p.121), and in the other it is the narrator, "un de mes bras passé sous ses épaules" (p.121). Furthermore, the oscillation between the present and past tenses seen earlier is here replaced by a continuous neutralizing present tense which is signalled by the use of the shifter "maintenant" at the start of almost every sentence:

maintenant il tombe (p.118)  
maintenant il git sur le sol (p.119)  
maintenant elle peut le voir (p.119)  
maintenant je pouvais les entendre (p.119)  
maintenant il s'élance (p.120)  
à présent le court morceau (p.121)  
maintenant elle entoure ses épaules (p.121)  
maintenant deux petites filles (p.121)  
maintenant elle ne fait plus que crier (p.121)

The repetition of "maintenant", reminiscent of Robbe-Grillet's novels, no longer conveying any sense of time, acts simply like a signal denoting a moment of shift, like the clicking of a slide-projector in a swift showing of a succession of disconnected pictures. The

temporal element has been completely neutralized by the writing. The final paragraph describes the polyphony of different voices passing through the narrator's consciousness:

Maintenant elle ne fait plus que crier mais  
je ne l'entends pas crier presque tous ont  
la bouche ouverte sans doute crient-ils aussi  
les uns de douleur les autres pour s'exciter  
au combat le tumulte est à ce point où l'on  
n'entend plus rien/. (p.122)

Unlike the narrator of La Route des Flandres who attempts, however unsuccessfully, to reconstruct the past, here the narrator is a passive agent, a nodal point intersected by different strands of fiction. The motif of centrality and frame is repeated throughout this section, depicting the self at the centre of a "maëlstrom":

et moi non plus étranger, spectateur regardant (p.116)  
mais maintenant au centre même de ce maëlstrom  
tournoyant sans fin entre les volutes dorées  
des cadres et moi au centre/. (p.117)

In sum, the pervading disposition of "Bataille" can be described as being one of neutralization. Firstly, there is a neutralization of time and space: "peut-être le temps est-il une notion qui n'a pas sa place ici non plus que celle d'espace d'air/." (p.106). Secondly, the narrator is depicted as a passive, neutral centre. In this way, La Bataille de Pharsale follows on from the development stretching through Simon's novels from La Route des Flandres onwards which increasingly focusses on the undoing of narrative framework and the disintegration of narratorial identity. Thirdly, neutralization in this section is evoked when the clamour of the different sequences is reduced to silence: "le tapage figé à ce niveau paroxysmique où il se détruit lui-même, immobilisé lui aussi dans le silence".

The structure of "Voyage" is similar to that of "Bataille". As we have seen, the innumerable intertextual fragments are all linked by

the common "signifié" of "travel" and its variants. Indeed, it is not only the fragments which are thus dominated by the whole section. The most recurrent sequence is one in which the narrator is travelling by train through Italy on his way to Greece. This serves as a variant of the movement/immobility paradox which we saw earlier in the descriptions of the metro and the catechism reproduction. Here it is the description of the movement of the train which provides the context for a repetition of the paradox:

emporté immobile sur cette banquette de sorte que  
je pourrais voir mots suite de mots s'étirant  
s'inscrivant sur les kilomètres de temps d'air  
je veux dire comme ces annonces ou ces dépêches  
dont le texte défile en lettres d'or tremblotantes  
sur ces écrans lumineux chaque lettre apparaissant  
l'une après l'autre (p.163-4)

The motif is more complicated in this instance since it refers back to at least two passages. Firstly, to the description of the horizontal strokes of a paintbrush terminating in round blobs on the canvas:

le pinceau [...] cessant alors d'avancer sa  
progression horizontale faisant place à un  
mouvement de rotation les soies tournant  
sur elles-mêmes agrandissant un point  
dessinant une sorte de boule de bourgeon  
enflammé rouge vif la couleur fraîche luisante  
comme de l'émail barre rigide gonflée en  
relief comme ces cicatrices rosâtres (p.58)

The second allusion is to the description of the abandoned "moissonneuse":

Divers longerons, tiges et barres de fer  
s'entrecroisent, fixés à leurs départs et à  
leurs intersections par des boulons, re-  
liant l'ensemble que constituent l'essieu,  
les diverses roues et leurs axes à un bâti  
de fer en forme d'équerre aux côtés sensible-  
ment égaux qui supportent deux planches dessin-  
ant comme les deux côtés d'une boîte plate dont  
manqueraient les deux autres côtés et le couvercle (p.148)

The nodal point, "boule", "bourgeon", or "boulon" reappears in relation to the journey we have been examining in "Voyage": 19

le train de nouveau engagé dans une courbe le wagon oscillant se dandinant s'inclinant vers l'intérieur du long tournant au centre duquel dans la vallée où l'ombre commençait à s'amasser usine qui semblait pivoter lentement sur elle-même assemblage compliqué de passerelles de tuyaux de tours d'acier de poutrelles de cubes /.../ comme si elle avait surgi /.../ brûlante et minérale des épaisseurs profondes de la terre /.../ (p.161)

Thus the train is a variant of the stroke of the paintbrush or one of the several "barres de fer" in the "machine agricole" with the towns it traverses as focal points of intersection. On the other hand, a different perspective may be discerned in which the train is itself the central point of interconnection. The sudden intrusion of light breaking in through the window of the compartment is formulated in terms of the motif of "tige" which we noted in the "moissonneuse" description:

la vitre le rectangle obstrué éclatant tout à coup se fragmentant l'espace l'air lui-même bruyamment fracassés en pans d'ombre de lumière de barres striées pointillées noir et jaune se précipitant à l'intérieur du compartiment fuyant à toute vitesse puis la femme reprit sa position et de nouveau je ne vis plus que l'immobile quadrillage noir et blanc /.../ (p.157)

Thus the train itself can be seen either as a central space with its own frame and interior, as in the description of the carriages standing at the station:

Il y avait un train arrêté de l'autre côté formé de ces vieux wagons sans couloir avec une portière par compartiment un omnibus sans doute la plupart des portières ouvertes les gens à têtes de paysans assis à l'intérieur avec des paniers ou des paquets sur les genoux nous regardant d'un air inexpressif /.../ (p.167)

or it can be seen as a force of movement wending its way through a succession of nodal points:

le train patient infatigable continuant à parcourir

la vaste terre s'enfonçant toujours plus  
avant pénétrant/. (p.162)

The alternating pattern of "Voyage" is not entirely like the alternation we have already defined in part one and in "Bataille". In this case, it does not take the form of juxtaposition. Instead, the oscillation is between two motifs which are encapsulated within the same fictional unit: the train. The two motifs extend throughout the whole section. The static motif of frame or interiority stems from the description of "Les Dernieres Cartouches", a painting which is structured along the lines of traditional perspective:

Espace clos au contraire, décor fermé. Boite dont  
l'un des côtés a simplement été enlevé. Comme pour  
les comédies bourgeoises le mari et la femme et  
l'amant/. (p.166)

The motif of movement stems from the description of Poussin's "Orion Aveugle Marchant vers la Lumière du Soleil Levant".

Critique anglais qui définit le baroque movement  
into space malheureusement intraduisible le mot  
into n'ayant en français que des équivalents  
faibles comme au dedans de ou à l'intérieur de/. (p.160)

The weakness of the French equivalents lies precisely in their inability to distinguish between *interiority* and penetration which forms the basis of the oscillation of motifs. The motif of interiority is propagated mainly by the repetition of "cadre" in "encadrement de la fenêtre" (p.161), "cadre de l'alcôve" (p.166), and "visage encadré" (p.173). The motif of "movement into", stemming as we have seen from Poussin's painting, is present in the reference to the motion of the train "s'enfonçant" (p.162), and to the erotic sequences, "quand il s'enfonce de nouveau en elle faisant entendre un bruit" (p.176). The function of this oscillatory perspective is to provide a formal parallel to the "éclat de narration" which will come about in the

following section: the appearance of O. Like the effect emitted by a Necker cube,<sup>20</sup> permitting an oscillation between two possible interpretations of the same figure, the play of motifs or pattern in La Bataille de Pharsale suggests a perspective of oscillation and textual "dédoublement". The narrative framework of the novel has already been shown to be unstable, with shifts between present and past tenses and between first and third person narratives. "Voyage" opens with a description of part of della Francesca's "Défaite de Chosroës" which leads on to an image of "dédoublement":

Expression semblable sur les photos de vedettes de cinéma ou de milliardaires. Comme une sorte de masque, plaqué. Second visage, en surimpression pour ainsi dire, superposé à des traits originellement beaux. (p.154)

The appearance of "dédoublement" is also to be found in the description of the movement of the train:

les rails se divisant bruyant s'écartant bifurquant se rapprochant divergeant de nouveau se dédoublant encore se multipliant s'étalant sur une grande surface [.] (p.164)

The motif of movement/penetration is linked with the disintegration of the self, the dominant force of "je". Firstly, the scattering of letters rushing past his window has a dislocating effect on the narrator:

suite de mots s'étirant s'inscrivant sur les kilomètres de temps d'air je veux dire comme ces annonces ou ces dépêches dont le texte défile en lettres d'or sur ces écrans lumineux chaque lettre apparaissant l'une après l'autre O glissant de droite R à gauche I en clignotant O s'enluyant avec N une inexorable régularité [...] le mot n'étant jamais visible tout entier moi déjà plus le même ailleurs à plusieurs centaines de mètres déjà plus vieux de plusieurs secondes [...] (p.164)

Secondly, the description of the woman in the compartment reading her book links the motif of "movement into" with that of reading. The



woman's act of reading is described as a movement "out of her body" and "into the text":

c'est-à-dire comme si quelque chose d'immatériel  
qui le remplissait l'instant d'avant se vidait  
tout à coup, des milliers de petites particules  
qu'il me semblait voir, comme la limaille sur  
ces champs magnétiques, abandonnant le corps  
pour se précipiter, comme aspirées, sur les  
pages ouvertes, et s'y fixer, le corps maintenant  
inerte, comme dans une carapace oubliée lb, posée  
sur la banquette, filant horizontalement au-dessus  
des rails à travers la campagne (p.172)

The image of "limaille" echoes an earlier description of the  
"ruissellement d'une lumière" of the spotlights at a wrestling match,  
"qui semblait là encore composée de particules visibles, une sorte  
d'implacable grésil s'abattant sur eux" (p.139). The focus on the  
line of contact between the woman's eyes and the page she is reading  
is an instance of focus on frame or contour, like the indefinable  
area separating town and country:

Pas encore la pleine campagne: plutôt cette  
zone où les extrêmes confins des villes  
achèvent de se désagréger, se dépiauter,  
commençant à laisser de nouveau place aux  
prés, aux champs. (p.174)

The final section of part two, entitled "O", contains an abstract  
depiction of the associative pattern underlying the structure of the  
novel:

Soit alors O la position occupée par l'oeil  
de l'observateur (O.) et d'où part une  
droite invisible OO' rejoignant l'oeil à  
l'objet sur lequel est fixé le regard (p.181)

In addition to the fact that both subject and object are designated  
by O (the only difference being the use of the apostrophe in the  
naming of the object (O')), the line of association between them  
is the point of contact, OO'. This is a repetition of the formal  
pattern already denoted in the description of the cartoon strip.

les trois images [...] composant, peut-être à l'insu du dessinateur, une sorte de triptyque où l'on passerait de la première image à la troisième par une rotation (un rabattement) d'un demi-cercle [...] (pp.69-70)

The neutral aspect of O is underlined by the interchangeability of its identity:

il faut aussi considérer la droite OF dans son sens FO: soit alors un autre observateur (ou observatrice) O. se tenant en F., c'est-à-dire dans la chambre qui correspond à la fenêtre du cinquième étage, et observant l'observateur (qui, de sujet, devient ainsi objet - la lettre O pouvant donc également, dans cette situation, continuer à le désigner) [...] (p.184)

O as a neutral pronoun, substituting for "je", "il, and "elle", thus becomes the linguistic point of shift between the identities of the subject. The dramatization of the displacement is, in this instance, made in the context of perception, the literal setting of "point of view":

imaginer le spectacle que lui-même peut offrir à un regard extérieur, que ce soit celui de l'observatrice dissimulée derrière le reflet de la vitre ou celui de toute autre personne qui pourrait l'observer, soit dans le moment présent, soit par la suite, O. n'étant donc qu'un simple point compris à l'intérieur de tout autre cône de vision balayant la place [...] (p.185) 21

The metaphorical use of "trace", reminiscent of similar descriptions in La Route des Flandres and Histoire, depicts O as an empty sign, like a frame whose content is interchangeable, or a hollow "signifiant" through which a succession of different "signifiés" can pass:

on doit se figurer l'ensemble du système comme un mobile se déformant sans cesse autour de quelques rares points fixes, par exemple l'intersection de la droite OO' et du trajet suivi par le pigeon dans son vol, ou encore celle des itinéraires de deux voyages, ou encore le nom PHARSALE figurant également dans un recueil scolaire

des textes latins et sur un panneau indicateur au bord d'une route de Thessalie [7] (p.186)

Jean Ricardou quotes this passage (which Simon has called the key to the novel) <sup>22</sup> in support of his claim that the composition of La Bataille de Pharsale is based on the principle of analogy:

En d'autres termes, ce livre s'élabore par intersections. Deux ensembles s'intersectent, en effet, s'ils ont un sous-ensemble commun; c'est le cas de la métaphore (les signifiés communs qui la permettent) comme de la rime (les syllabes communes qui l'autorisent). Tout croisement d'itinéraire forme ainsi en l'espace de la fiction une image du principe qui la constitue: la loi d'analogie. Mieux: il obéit lui-même à ce principe et le désigne ainsi doublement. C'est par analogie (il est une image) qu'il insiste sur le fonctionnement par analogie.<sup>23</sup>

One cannot dispute this claim, indeed everything that has been said so far in this chapter would appear to support it. Yet there remains an important gap which is not filled by this account of analogy. Metaphorical analogy is a binary activity: two separate units are united by a common feature. However, La Bataille de Pharsale is governed by analogy as a triptych structure, where the central panel acts as a meeting-place of elements from the two side panels flanking it. It is this central, "neutral" locus which the text continually delineates and which plays a vital role in the intertextual perspective of the novel.

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### 3. Intertextual perspective.

Apart from its narrative discontinuity, La Bataille de Pharsale is riddled with countless fragments of intertextuality. It is this feature which inspires Roland Mortier's analysis which, in contrast with

Ricardou's, sees the principle of discontinuity as the underlying force of the novel:

Les structures de base dans la Bataille sont parfaitement intelligibles. C'est leur lien qui est volontairement brouillé, oblitéré: la suppression des signes de ponctuation, le recours au style nominal, aux idéogrammes, la fréquence des infinitifs, l'emploi surtout de ces figures que Fontanier appelle "de construction par sous-entente", telle l'ellipse, le zeugme, l'anacoluthie, autant de procédés qui créeront le sentiment d'une disjonction. 24

Both critics are, of course, right. Analogy, the creation of links, and discontinuity, the obliteration of links, are two sides of the same coin. Neither notion, however, refers to the "lieu commun" itself, the space in which these connections and disconnections are made. As we have already noted, O is, on the level of narrative discourse, the sign of such a space. In the third and final part of the novel, O refers, at different points, to the narrator, his uncle, and to the narrator's lover. The frequency with which O's identity is displaced, and the consequent result of narrative discontinuity, can be measured from the following summary:

O= uncle Charles (p.190); O= narrator (p.203);  
O= woman (p.211); O= narrator (p.217); O= woman  
(p.224); O= uncle Charles (p.229); O=narrator  
(p.230); O= uncle Charles (p.233); O= narrator  
(p.238); O= woman (p.244); O= narrator (p.248);  
O= woman (p.253); O= narrator (p.256).

Jean Ricardou notices the same method of arousing confusion in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury by the use of the same name, Quentin, to designate two characters. 25 This point is strengthened by the parallel confusion between masculinity and femininity. One Quentin is Benjy's brother, the other is his niece. Ricardou also notices the parallelism with A la recherche du temps perdu where the multiple similarities between Un Amour de Swann and the rest of the novel are

matched by the confusion between the two time spans in La Bataille de Pharsale, dealing alternately with the lives of the narrator and uncle Charles:

Entre Un Amour de Swann et le reste de la Recherche déjà se multipliaient d'annonciatrices similitudes; entre les deux époques de La Bataille de Pharsale le rapport se fait plus travailleur: imbrications et permutations inventent, dans un espace désormais violemment producteur, toute une fiction nouvelle. Nul doute, donc, que cette radicalisation irrécusable ne soit désignée, en La Bataille de Pharsale, par injection active, précisément, de certaines passages d'Un Amour de Swann.

26

Once again Ricardou's analysis is faultless in itself but the same factor is missing. That there is a relationship between La Bataille de Pharsale and The Sound and the Fury and À la recherche du temps perdu is unquestionable but that the relationship is of the same type is open to doubt. According to the *definition* given in the preceding chapter, the relationship between Simon's novel and Faulkner's cannot be described as an example of intertextuality since there is no recognition of it in La Bataille de Pharsale. There can be no doubt that there is a relationship of influence, but to establish this fact we need to have recourse to evidence from outside the text. There is also a second important feature in the distinction between intertextuality and influence: the process of transformation. It is this latter element which is activated by the triptych structure of the novel underlying the intertextual associations.

As Stuart Sykes has pointed out,<sup>27</sup> the most striking "mise en abyme" in the novel is the cartoon strip which is described in part one and which mirrors the novel's triptych framework. The three "frames" form a fragment of a story showing a man speaking from a gymnasium to a woman by telephone. There are several ways in which the cartoon strip

links up with the text as a whole, one of which is the description of the telephone network which mirrors the "nocuds de signification" motif we have been examining:

la boîte métallique accrochée au mur, avec son mystérieux cadran circulaire, ses lettres, ses chiffres, ses déclics secrets, ses relais, son système de minuscules bobines, ses réseaux de connexions, ses écheveaux de fils aux vives couleurs, ses circuits [J(p.170)

It is this perspective of inversion which is the most important feature of the cartoon strip. The central picture depicts the woman stretched out amongst the cushions on her divan speaking to the man on the telephone. The two other pictures, flanking the central one, show the man speaking at the other end of the line. In both cases, however, the man is facing inwards, turned towards the centre which is

exactement occupée par la bouche sanglante de la femme dont la vision est immédiatement encadrée à droite et à gauche par l'appareil mural dont la place du premier au troisième dessin s'est trouvée inversée, comme si l'image intermédiaire (l'Eve perfide) se trouvait en somme à l'intérieur de l'appareil [J(p.170)

The transformational movement of inversion in the novel is produced by the writing, as in the example of the inversion of "comparé" and "comparant" between the mineral imagery in the description of the body of a man making love as "une masse bosselée, rocailleuse" (p.212) and the personification in the description of a landscape: "épaulement de la colline pierreuse" (p.220). On the level of narrative framework, inversion is synonymous with "dédoublement" (a split of identity, or rather a loss of identity in the movement from "je" to "il" and "elle"). However, this loss of identity is not limited to the sphere of narrative framework as it is in the earlier novels. The play of intertextuality extends the scope of inversion beyond the bounds of

each separate work. The various books and paintings which La Bataille de Pharsale relates to can be seen to be the "boulons" in the motif we have been following, while the writing which, so to speak, filters from one work to another creating the link, is the "tige". An example of this is the use of idiomatic expressions which abound not only in La Route des Flandres, as noted by Dominique Lancelaux,<sup>28</sup> but also in La Bataille de Pharsale and A la recherche du temps perdu. In this case the common denominator between the three works is the play of "signifiant" in the expression "affaire locale" which appears in the description of a battle setting:

Ce n'est évidemment qu'un des épisodes de la bataille  
[...] une de ces "affaires" locales [...] (p.107)

The passage repeatedly shifts in its description, "peut-être la bataille s'est-elle déplacée?", like the oscillating perspective of a Necker cube, between the battle of Pharsalus and the narrator's experience in the second world war which is the setting for La Route des Flandres. Several similarities are indicated between the two novels. The description of the figures who "semblent doués d'une sorte de phosphorescence, comme si la lumière coulait pour ainsi dire d'eux-mêmes" (p.106) echoes a similar description of the peasant woman in La Route des Flandres : "comme si sa peau était elle-même la source de lumière".<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the earlier novel is evoked by an imitation fragment of intertextuality in an italicized passage describing a scene which is very similar to the one in La Route des Flandres when the riders arrive at a village. One must stress that it is an "imitation fragment" because the use of italics gives the reader the impression that it is a quotation from the novel, when, in fact, it is not. One might call this an example of "fake intertextuality" or a misleading use of italics based on a

re-presentation of some of the focal points in the equivalent passage in La Route des Flandres such as "valises crevées" (p.110) and "valise éventrée"<sup>30</sup> and the reference to the window curtain, "parfois un rideau pendait au dehors comme s'il avait été aspiré" (p.111), is an echo of the curtain with the peacock design which obsesses Georges.<sup>31</sup> The play on "affaire" is, however, more productive in its effect and therefore a more fundamental common denominator than the ones just mentioned. Its importance lies partly in the fact that it is an *idiomatic* expression,<sup>32</sup> and consequently already a piece of intertextuality since it is "reported speech", a fact emphasized by the inverted commas. "Affaire" links back to the following passage in La Route des Flandres:

j'avais oublié que ce genre de choses s'appelait simplement "une affaire" comme on dit "avoir une affaire" pour "se battre en duel" délicat euphémisme formule plus discrète plus élégante allons tant mieux rien n'était encore perdu puisqu'on était toujours entre gens de bonne compagnie dites ne dites pas, exemple ne dites pas "l'escadron s'est fait massacrer dans une embuscade", mais nous avons eu une chaude affaire à l'entrée du village de [.] 33

The writing moves from "affaires locales" in La Bataille de Pharsale to "chaudes affaires" in La Route des Flandres and back to the italicized passage of "fake intertextuality" in La Bataille de Pharsale:

je ne savais pas encore que des expressions comme marcher au feu le baptême de feu voir le feu n'étaient pas des métaphores armes à feu et que les traces que laissent la guerre derrière elle sont simplement noires et sales exactement comme la rue d'un conduit de cheminée au petit jour nous traversâmes un village [.] (p.111)

Thus, although the relationship between "affaires locales" and "chaude affaire" is one of repetition based on an analogy between the two passages, the relationship between "chaude affaire" and the expressions



with "feu" is a metaphorical one based on contiguity. The intertextual relationship between the two passages is not static in the sense that pure reference or allusion would be, but productive in the generative chain of the text by "feeding off" the context of the common denominator. Moreover, the "origin" of the expression is itself intertextual since in La Prisonnière the narrator tells us that Morel has learnt from his father that there is another idiomatic meaning of "affaires" used in connection with money:

il avait appris de son père [...] qu'en pareil cas il est convenable d'écrire à la personne à qui on veut s'adresser "qu'on a à lui parler pour affaires" qu'on lui "demande un rendez-vous pour affaires". Cette formule magique enchantait tellement Morel qu'il eût, je pense, souhaité perdre de l'argent rien que pour le plaisir de demander un rendez-vous "pour affaires".

34

The intertextual link between La Bataille de l'harsale and La Jalousie is equally productive. The points of contact between the two novels are numerous. Indeed one might say that Simon's novel enters into a triptych relationship with Robbe-Grillet's novel and A la recherche du temps perdu. The theme of jealousy is the most obvious link between the three novels. Another connecting-link is the "mille-pattes" in La Jalousie which is echoed in the description of the scrum formed by the rugby players in La Bataille de l'harsale, "comme une sorte de bête multicolore de mille-pattes" (p.54). Could it be that the quotation from A la recherche du temps perdu which the narrator in Simon's novel is searching for,

Disant que la jalousie est comme ... comme ...  
Me rappelant l'endroit: environ dans le premier  
tiers en haut d'une page de droite (p.20)

is the definition given by the narrator in Un amour de Swann when he describes Swann's jealousy as an octopus?

La jalousie, comme une pieuvre qui jette une première puis une seconde, puis une troisième amarre, s'attacha solidement à ce moment de cinq heures du soir, puis à un autre encore. <sup>35</sup>

Another point of contact between the three novels lies in the connotations of adultery in the words "mauvais mécanicien" in La Jalousie referring not only to Franck's inability to mend the car but also to his sexual skills. The allusion to sex via the motif of mechanics is reiterated several times, as in the following description of the zip fastener of A.'s dress:

Au-dessous de la chevelure mouvante, la taille très fine est coupée verticalement, dans l'axe du dos, par l'étroite fermeture métallique de la robe. <sup>36</sup>

Is there not a relationship here with La Prisonnière where Marcel's trust in the chauffeur, or "mécanicien" <sup>37</sup> whom he has hired to keep an eye on Albertine, is shown to have been possibly misguided when Charles describes Théodore, the "cocher" from Combray, hired by one of his friends, as a "retrousseur de jupons"? <sup>38</sup> Simon's novel inverts the analogy between sexuality and mechanics. Whereas in Proust's novel and in La Jalousie sexuality (the "comparé") is evoked in terms of mechanics (the "comparant"), in La Bataille de l'arsale there is a description of the "mécaniques démantibulées" strewn along the Greek countryside in which the machines (the "comparé") are described in terms of sexuality (the "comparant"). <sup>39</sup> The metaphor is reversed. The analogy hinges on the pun in "cocotte" meaning both "whore" and the base of the brake lever, "cocotte du frein" (p.149):

Elles laissent peu à peu entrevoir leurs anatomies incompréhensibles, délicates, féminines, aux connexions elles aussi délicates et compliquées. Leurs articulations autrefois huilées, aux frottements doux, sont maintenant grippées, raidies. Elles dressent vers le ciel, dans une emphatique et interminable protestation, vaguement ridicules, comme de vieilles cocottes déchues, des membres

décharnés: quelques tringles, quelque brancard  
pourri, un siège où aucun conducteur ne s'assiéra  
jamais et qui ne sert plus que du perchoir à  
quelques poules maigres au cou déplumé, rose vif. (p.153)

Olga Bernal has discussed the difference between the scene in Un Amour de Swann where Swann, spying on Odette, taps at the shutters of what he mistakenly thinks is Odette's window and the sequence in La Jalousie where the "implicit" narrator is spying from within, through the shutters of a window at A. and Franck sitting on the terrace. According to Bernal, whereas Robbe-Grillet's text presents us only with what is directly visible to the narrator's eye as he looks out, in Proust's text the passage is "padded out" with the author's thoughts:

On voit dans la scène effective du personnage  
derrière la jalousie, que le fait n'est pour  
Proust que prétexte à approfondir la personnal-  
ité. Ce qui se passe "maintenant", ce qui est  
présent n'a d'autre valeur que de déclencher  
la possibilité d'être selon un mode réflexif  
et spirituel. 40

What is more interesting, since Bernal's phenomenological position leads her into the "utopian" consideration of the "presence" of objects in fiction (it is strange that she should put her trust in the "maintenant" of Robbe-Grillet's novel), is that the two descriptions should resemble one another. Indeed the motif is repeated in the passage in La Prisonnière where Marcel, returning home, looks up at the window of Albertine's room:

Du trottoir je voyais la fenêtre de la chambre  
d'Albertine, cette fenêtre autrefois toujours noire,  
le soir, quand elle n'habitait pas la maison,  
que la lumière électrique de l'intérieur,  
segmentée par les pleins des volets, striait de  
haut en bas de barres d'or parallèles. Ce  
grimoire magique, autant il était clair pour moi  
et dessinait devant mon esprit calme des images  
précises. 41

The comparison with "grimoire magique" or wizard's book repeats the

association between Swann spying on Odette and the decipherment of manuscripts. The association provides an argument against Olga Bernal's claim that "le roman de Proust est tout entier une tension vers l'au-delà de l'immédiat", which can also be restated as a tension between the present and the past, since in both cases the description is a self-reflexive analogy of the opacity of writing. If we interpret what lies behind the window in both cases as "l'au-delà de l'immédiat", Swann's gross error indicates that this remains beyond one's grasp. Similarly, Marcel will soon discover that the comfort he feels in the security of having Albertine to himself is totally illusory. The "images précises" of the "grimoire magique" are not as clear-cut as he thinks. The "grimoire magique" can be interpreted as a representation of the "Signifiant" of Proust's novel and the "images précises" (which are soon shown to be "floues") can be seen to represent the evanescent "Signifiés". This "reading" of Proust follows on from a reading of La Bataille de Pharsale. The writing also produces specific points of contact between the two novels. If, as Ricardou correctly notes, the "jaune/noir/jaune" series in La Bataille de Pharsale is a product of the generation of the Valéry exergue, it is equally correct to claim that the series is an inverted product of the "noir/jaune/noir" series in which Swann's flash of (mistaken) discovery is surrounded by the "night" of his ignorance:

Tout était désert et noir dans ce quartier [...] Parmi l'obscurité de toutes les fenêtres éteintes depuis longtemps dans la rue, il en vit une seule d'où débordait - entre les volets qui en pressaient la pulpe mystérieuse et dorée - la lumière qui remplissait la chambre [...]

The connections between the two novels through "jaune" multiply further when the narrator has entered the building and knocks fruitlessly at the lover's door. The "mince panneau" coloured "d'un jaune ocre foncé" (p.23) can be read as an echo of the "petit pan de

mur jaune" of the Vermeer painting which Bergotte "discovers" at his death:

C'est ainsi que j'aurais dû écrire, disait-il.  
Mes derniers livres sont trop secs, il aurait  
fallu passer plusieurs couches de couleurs,  
rendre ma phrase en elle-même précieuse, comme  
ce petit pan de mur jaune. 42

In sum, the associations made by the writing of the three novels cover the different levels of the fiction: theme (jealousy, decipherment), plot (spying through windows), imagery ("mille-pattes" and "mauvais mécanicien").

For a specific view of the function of the relationship between the three novels we must turn to the start of part three of Simon's text. It is worth remembering that this final section of the novel is totally free of italicized intertextuality, thus ostensibly presenting a continuous, unbroken present tense narrative as well as a visibly uniform text whose signification is uninterrupted by intertextuality. It is needless to say that this illusion is not maintained for long.

Part three begins with a sequence in which O. is sitting in a train compartment. The reader can justifiably identify O. as the narrator since his compartment is also occupied by Spanish travellers from which one can infer that this is a continuation of the sequence described in "Voyage". There is a shift of identity in the second paragraph, although the continued use of the present tense partially conceals any change in the narrative. O. is now uncle Charles sitting in his hotel room looking at the train ticket showing Arezzo as the climax of the journey:

PARIS-FIRENZE, FIRENZE-AREZZO, AREZZO-FIRENZE,  
FIRENZE-WIEN, WIEN-MUNICHEN, MUNICHEN-PARIS (p.190)

Having written a letter addressed to Odette Pa..., O. decides to tear it up and flush it down the lavatory:

Il se lève, sort de la pièce, suit le couloir, entre dans les W.-C., jette les morceaux de papier déchiré dans la cuvette et tire la chasse. Quand l'eau cesse de bouillonner quelques fragments surnagent dans le fond, tournoyant lentement. (p.191)

Once again O., having begun writing a postcard to Odette Pa..., stops and tears it up, this time placing the fragments in an ashtray, "sur lequel sont écrits les mots MARTINI-ROSSI en lettres noires sur une bande blanche qui empiète sur un disque rouge." Also on his table is the glass from which he has been drinking:

Sur le guéridon est posé son verre au fond duquel un glaçon finit de fondre dans un reste de liquide d'un brun orangé. (p.193)

This sentence displays a subtle intertextual connection with La Jalousie. The play of the "signifiants" "fond" and "fondre" has its origin in Robbe-Grillet's novel where a similar description appears with regard to the table, on the terrace, around which the three characters are sitting. The association forms the hinge of one of the many otherwise inexplicable chronological shifts in the novel. Franck is leaving after having returned A. to her home following the overnight trip to town:

Franck se lève de son fauteuil, avec une vigueur soudaine, et pose sur la table basse le verre qu'il vient de finir d'un trait. Il n'y a plus trace du cube de glace dans le fond. Franck s'est avancé, d'un pas raide, jusqu'à la porte du couloir. Il s'y arrête. La tête et le buste pivotent en direction de A., restée assise.

"Excusez-moi, encore d'être un si mauvais mécanicien." 44

A few lines later, a new paragraph begins with the following sentence:

Au fond du verre qu'il a déposé sur la table en partant, achève de fondre un petit morceau de glace, arrondi d'un côté, présentant de de l'autre une arête en biseau. 45

The punning association of "fond" and "fondre" thus acts as the point of contact between the two conflicting statements: "il n'y a plus trace du cube de glace dans le fond" and the sentence just quoted. The contradiction can soon be seen to be of fundamental structural importance since it becomes clear that the new passage is chronologically anterior to the one it follows in textual contiguity: the passage is now referring to a point in time before the trip to town. Thus chronology, or the linearity of plot, gives way to the "metaplastic" <sup>46</sup> play of the writing in La Jalousie. The equivalent sentence in La Bataille de Pharsale is a recognition of two things: firstly, of the intertextual role that La Jalousie plays in connection with it; and secondly, that this role is primarily motivated by the use of "signifiants" to produce chronological inversion and discontinuity. The irony in the title of part three of La Bataille de Pharsale, "Chronologie des Evénements", thus takes on intertextual significance too. The intertextual activity in the passage we have been following intensifies. O., sitting at his café table, considers an Italian banknote with a representation of Verdi on it:

Plus bas, c'est-à-dire à peu près au centre géométrique du billet, le chiffre 1000 est dessiné en gros caractères ornés, bleu-gris, sur le fond d'un disque rosâtre décoré lui aussi de motifs compliqués et à l'intérieur duquel se trouve un autre disque, plus petit et de couleur orange, où est représentée une tête de femme, vue de face, d'une type régulier, comme les têtes des bas-reliefs antiques. (p. 124)

The motif of "fond" which is now charged with the signification of syntagmatic displacement as found in La Jalousie is related here to the perspective of "emboîtement" or inclusion: "disque" within "disque". It therefore comes as no surprise that the shift to the next paragraph is based simply on the common feature of the "tête de Méduse" which

is printed on the central "disque" of the 1000 lire banknote and on the "disque du bouclier" in the della Francesca reproduction.

Moreover, part of the description reiterates the presence of Robbe-Grillet's novel within the text:

A l'intérieur du V renversé que dessinent les jambes on peut voir: [...] la main d'un homme encore serrée sur la poignée d'un glaive (l'avant-bras, la main et le glaive qui la prolonge coupent le V renversé à peu près à l'horizontale, à la façon de la barre d'un A situé un peu plus bas et légèrement de travers. La main tenant le glaive [...] (pp.194-5)

Apart from the configuration of the letter A reminding one of the character in Robbe-Grillet's novel, the passage contains an echo of the repetitive description of hands in La Jalousie, as in the sequence of A. brushing her hair, or clutching the table-knife in the "mille-pattes" episode, or in the following part of the description of the photograph of A. sitting at a café table:

Posée sur la table à proximité d'un second verre, près du bord de l'image, une main d'homme se raccorde seulement d'une manche de veste, qu'interrompt aussitôt la marge blanche verticale. 47

Even the pun of "main tenant" and "maintenant" is here presented as a common point between both novels, referring to the disruption of chronology by the writing. Furthermore, the associative play of the generative potential of "fond/fondre" extends in intertextual relationship with la recherche du temps perdu. Although Proust's novel is present in La Bataille de Pharsale in a more direct and explicit way than La Jalousie is, Simon's text provides the locus for the writing to make the interconnections between the three novels. One of the fragments from A la recherche du temps perdu which appears, italicized, in Simon's novel is:



Et sur les places les divinités des fontaines  
publiques tenant en main un jet de glace (p.22)

Each appearance of this fragment contains a slightly varied repetition  
of the "signifiant" "glace":

Et sur les places les divinités des fontaines  
publiques tenant en main un jet de glace  
entendu dire me demanda-t-il en me quittant  
que ma tante Oriane divorcerait personnellement  
je  
Une gradation verticale de bleus glaciers Et les  
tours du Trocadero qui semblaient si proches des  
degrés turquoise (p.90)  
divinités des fontaines publiques tenant en  
main un jet de glace pine à pleines mains  
et alors peut-être immobilisés comme ça  
retenant leur respiration sueur se glacant  
sur eux (p.93)

Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon refers to the "contamination" here with  
the passage from L'Ane d'Or preceding it by a few lines,<sup>48</sup> "et  
saisissant ma pine à pleines mains elle l'entorçait" (p.93). This  
observation underlines the complicated tissue of intertextual  
relations, the richness and diversity of the associations. The  
multiple motivation of intertextuality is always offering an  
alternative pattern of association. Ricardou defines the "simonisation"  
of this passage from L'Ane d'Or as an example of "anti-pastiche":  
that is, a re-shaping of the vocabulary of Apuleius's text within the  
new context of La Bataille de Pharsale. However, the fundamental  
triptych pattern remains, as we have been arguing, between Simon's  
novel, A la recherche du temps perdu, and La Jalousie. The culmination  
of the "fontaine/glace" fragment comes in the passage at the start of  
part three which, as we have already seen, is intertextually related  
with the "terrasse" scene in La Jalousie. O., sitting at the café  
table with the ice cube melting in his glass, looks out at the square:  
"Il regarde la place, la fontaine, les statues" (p.193). The short,

staccato sentence is a re-shaping of the Proust fragment. Not only does the statue holding the "jet de glace" relate to the "glagon" in the glass, and to the figure in the della Francesca reproduction holding the "glaive", but also "fontaine" relates to "fond" and "fondre". The triptych of intertextuality thus enacts a "dédoublément" of language, revealing the writing to be composed of several layers of discourse. Our description of La Bataille de Pharsale as the central panel of the triptych between the three novels can now be seen to be justified. The novel enlaces itself in the web of relations between A la recherche du temps perdu and La Jalousie, at the same time urging the reader to read "across" the three novels and to create a network of intertextual associations.

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#### 4. Pastiche.

One may argue that the fact that there are more allusions and literary references in A la recherche du temps perdu than in the work of any other French writer apart from Montaigne<sup>49</sup> might suggest the ultimate failure of Proust's wish to free his writing of literary influence by the use of the "vertu purgative, exorcisante, du pastiche".<sup>50</sup> That argument is not pertinent to the present study. What is very interesting is that his aim in the Affaire Lemoine pastiches is to rid his writing of "pastiche involontaire". This distinction between voluntary and involuntary pastiche paved the way for the development of intertextuality in the "nouveau roman".

The element of pastiche is important in La Bataille de Pharsale since it highlights the framework of intertextual "emboîtement" which lies at the heart of the compositional structure of the novel.

According to our earlier definition, <sup>51</sup> "emboîtement" is "frame within frame". Intertextual "emboîtement", therefore, can be described as "text within text". As we have already seen, <sup>52</sup> intertextuality operates on two levels in La Bataille de Pharsale: on the syntagmatic or "screen" level where it takes the form of "collage"; and on the paradigmatic or "frame" level where it takes the form of textual associations produced by the reader. One can similarly distinguish two levels of intertextual activity as outlined by the perspective of pastiche in Simon's novel: the first may be termed the "palimpsest effect" and the second the "infinite regress of origin".

Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon has described the intertextual activity in La Bataille de Pharsale in the following way:

Il est clair que la Bataille de Pharsale ne "s'inspire pas des autres textes mais les relit les réécrit les redistribue dans son propre espace, on découvre les jonctions, les soubassements à la fois formels et idéologiques" les faisant servir à son propre texte. <sup>53</sup>

The notion of "re-writing" is crucial and can be compared with an equivalent phenomenon in art where, for instance, Picasso's "Desmoiselles au bord de la Seine" (1907) and his "Femmes d'Alger" (1955) are "re-paintings" of, respectively, works by Courbet and Delacroix. Another such example is Francis Bacon's "reconstruction" of Velazquez's "Pope Innocent X" (1960). The palimpsest effect of this form of pastiche produces a "dédoublement" of signifiants so that the observer has the impression of seeing two paintings in one. A parallel example in literature may be found in the following lines by Bruce Morrisette who notes a similarity between the "roman africain" which acts as "mise en abyme" in La Jalousie and Grahame Greene's The Heart of the Matter. Quoting Robbe-Grillet, he says:

"Les romans de Greene" m'a-t-il dit un jour,  
"m'ont souvent donné l'envie de les récrire." 54

Simon's novel develops this activity a stage further by "re-writing"  
La Jalousie "re-writing" The Heart of the Matter. The sequence of the  
train journey describes the young lady reading a book in the  
narrator's compartment:

tandis qu'elle était maintenant toute entière  
sans doute dans ce monde verdâtre que représentait  
le dessin sur la couverture colorée (p. 172)

That this "greenish world" is truly that of Graham Greene is confirmed  
later on in the naming of the title, LA POTENZA E LA GLORIA (p.173),  
and the references to the jungle setting, the whiskey priest, and  
"quelque chose d'anglo-christiano-saxon". As well as being a "résumé  
férocement caricatural" of Graham Greene's novel, 55 this example of  
pastiche mirrors the basic structure of intertextual "emboîtement"  
in the novel as a whole.

The second aspect of pastiche in La Bataille de Pharsale is the  
underlying pattern of what we have called the "infinite regress of  
origin". Here the overall effect is one of multiplicity of "voice"  
which complicates the reader's task of "situating" or "contextualizing"  
a given passage. Thus the italicized phrase "le sentiment de la  
mort" (p.120) presents a problem to the reader. Who is speaking? The  
first appearance of the phrase is totally enigmatic, especially with  
regard to the use of the possessive pronoun. The delay between the  
first appearance of the phrase and the eventual revelation of its  
origins serves only to allow the fragment time to sink into the  
text and merge into its pattern. The quotation is from Lucan's  
Pharsalia:

Puissent les dieux te donner non pas la mort,  
qui est le châtiment réservé à tous, mais,

après ton destin fatal, le sentiment de ta mort,  
Crastinus, toi, dont la main brandit la lance  
qui engagea le combat et la première teignit la  
Thessalie de sang romain! (p.235)

In this example scriptural intertextuality is accompanied by the motif of inclusion or "mise en abyme". The novel, La Bataille de Pharsale, offers a description of the battle of Pharsalus by quoting Lucan's epic poem entitled Pharsalia. Sometimes the text takes precautions against complacency in intertextuality where the citing of intertextual origin may satisfy the reader and provide some sort of "explanation" of a particular sentence or description and detract from the fragment itself and its relation with Simon's novel. In the case of the description of the death of a soldier in battle by an arrow landing in his mouth, there are several possibilities of origin. Firstly, as Ricardou has noted, the point of generation is the Valéry exercise:

M'as-tu percé de cette flèche ailée  
Qui vibre, vole, et qui ne vole pas!  
Le son m'enfante et la flèche me tue!

Secondly, its origin is suggested as being a painting:

comme dans ce tableau vu où? combat naval entre  
Vénitiens et Génois sur une mer bleu-noir  
crêtelée épineuse et d'une galère à l'autre  
l'arche empennée bourdonnante dans le ciel  
obscur l'un d'eux pénétrant dans sa bouche ouverte  
au moment où il s'élançait en avant l'épée levée  
entraînant ses soldats le transperçant clouant le  
cri au fond de sa gorge / 7 (pp.9-10)

Thirdly, a quotation from Plutarch's Caesar presents another possibility:

Il reçut dans la bouche un si violent coup  
de glaive que la pointe en sortit par la  
nuque. (p.236)

There are two important factors to be taken into account here. Firstly, the three "points of origin" are not strictly to be considered as alternatives but as simultaneous possibilities. The text thus creates a plurality of associations. Secondly, the parallelism between the

possibilities of scriptural (Plutarch) and pictorial (the forgotten painting) origin can be extended generally throughout the novel. The memory search itself "comme dans ce tableau vu où?" is echoed in the search for scriptural origin when the narrator scours Proust's novel for a definition of "jealousy" (p.20). 56

The element of pictorial intertextuality is equally related to the motif of "emboîtement", as in the following oft repeated comment accompanying some of the descriptions of della Francesca's painting:

Cette figure est empruntée à Polidoro  
da Caravaggio (pp.11b,200,242)

The "figure" in question is one which is often found in the work of Picasso where the subject is drawn in distorted perspective, showing, for instance, both eyes on one side of the face:

Le haut du buste est tourné vers la droite,  
tandis que le bas du corps, du fait que la  
jambe droite se porte en avant, est un peu  
tourné vers la gauche, de sorte que l'on  
voit à la fois la poitrine, le ventre, et  
les deux fesses. (p.200)

The final description of the painting comes at the end of the novel where a postcard reproduction of the section with the trumpeter is one of the objects on O.'s table as he writes his first sentence, which is also the novel's first and last:

Entre le bras vertical, le visage du souffleur  
et la ligne évasée de sa coiffure apparaît,  
comme encasté, un fragment de la partie bombée  
d'un casque vert décoré de tiges stylisées,  
jaunes, qui s'enroulent sur elles-mêmes, et d'un  
cimier en forme de nageoire dorsale de poisson  
[...] Tous ces éléments semblent encastés les  
uns dans les autres comme une marqueterie. (pp.269-70)

The description of the sound of trumpet-playing at dawn (pp.33,35, 94-5,112,153), set in an ambiguous time and place (which battle is it referring to?), is thus shown to have had its intertextual "origin" in

the "Défaite de Chosroës". But the delayed revelation has given the word time to enlase itself with the different strands of the fiction. "Trompette" is echoed in "trompe d'auto" (p.23) which the narrator hears as he witnesses his lover deceiving him ("tromper"). Here again a parallel can be found in the passage at the end of La Prisonnière where the "trompes d'automobile" (with connotations relating to the "mauvais mécanicien" motif) and the smell of petrol afford Marcel his final moments of happiness and confidence in Albertine before she leaves him. "Trompette" is thus one of the "signifiants" which perpetuate the theme of deception throughout the novel. The relationship with Proust's text is ironically emphasized in the following example of "false intertextuality":

modèle petite garce qui le trompait avec tout  
Ce pauvre Charles avec les femmes il était  
d'une naïveté et celle-là pour enlever sa  
culotte il ne lui fallait...(p.20)

The lines come at the end of a succession of discontinuous fragments from A la recherche du temps perdu. Although the lines could equally refer to Swann and Odette as they do to the narrator's uncle Charles, the lines do not, in fact, come from Proust. Simon's text thus self-consciously deceives the reader on the theme of deception.

The difference between pictorial and scriptural intertextuality is that the former focusses on the element of "space" and re-shapes the problem of origin into one of perception. The intertextual play between Francis Bacon's "Portrait of Pope Innocent X" and the one by Velazquez, or Picasso's "Las Méninas" and the painting under the same title by Velazquez is recognized only by seeing Velazquez's paintings in the Bacon and ~~Picasso~~ *one*. The relationship is based on a simultaneous recognition of the two works in one. As we have seen,

this perspective reflects the framework of scriptural intertextuality in Simon's novel. However, the focus on the paintings referred to in La Bataille de Pharaon is somewhat different. Here the spatial perspective is not one of simultaneity but of contiguity. It is this reference to space which the text uses to distinguish between the works of Poussin, della Francesca, and Ucello. In the first case, the paintings, "creux", seem to surround the spectator plunging him into its space; in the second case, the objects and figures are so crammed together that there are no empty gaps between them; and thirdly, Ucello's paintings present an orderly frame or proscenium stage type of perspective, in other words an interior with one open side wall through which the spectators can peer. In another description of a della Francesca painting the lack of space is strongly emphasized:

comme ces animaux ou ces objets enfermés dans un bloc  
de plexiglas, encastres les uns dans les autres  
par la pression des deux parois transparentes  
qui ne laisse plus subsister à la fin entre les  
combattants le moindre vide, toute espace [...] /  
intégralement rempli. (p.104)

The primacy which the della Francesca painting has over the other paintings described in La Bataille de Pharaon would tend to single out this motif of "encastrement" or lack of empty space. This perspective is created by an accentuated pattern of collage where space is composed entirely of an assemblage of disconnected parts. The parallelism between the principle underlying della Francesca's work and Simon's novel <sup>57</sup> can be gauged by considering the composition of the Arezzo mural as a whole, of which "La Défaite de Chosroës" is a part. Pierluigi de Vecchi offers the following analysis of the mural:

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(ou trouva déjà établi) le système *traditionnel* du partage de chaque paroi en trois registres, dont deux rectangulaires, selon un "usage un peu vague de la section d'or": cette distribution tenoit plus à la nécessité de créer des correspondances symétriques qu'elle n'était imposée par la ligne du récit. 58

The continuity of "signifiants" produces a discontinuity of "signifiés". More specifically, the motif of "encastrement" reflects La Bataille de Pharsale as the space in which the intertextual fragments are brought in contiguous proximity with one another. But what of the central locus? If in della Francesca's work there is no linking gap between the figures and therefore no backcloth against which they are set, in what way does this relate to Simon's novel? Can we speak of a "space" in the novel which is not intertextual and which one could define as forming a backcloth to the intertextual associations? It is of course true that not everything in the novel is "borrowed", but we have already seen how any unambiguous identification of such a space would be impossible. The disruption of linear narrative or chronology, the ambiguity of narratorial identity, and the multiple associations produced by the writing undermine any attempt at "singling out" a separate text which did not "belong" anywhere else from the outset. The triptych, we have seen, provides one of the most effective symbols of the structure of the text by emphasizing the inverted pattern of chiasmus, or ABBA, where the central panel is the space in which the other two meet. In the same way, the "essence" of La Bataille de Pharsale is the movement of intertextual association.

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##### 5. Transformation.

Association and discontinuity are the two fundamental features of

the textual composition of La Bataille de Pharsale. A common point of analogy associates two heterogenous fictional units but, at the same time, produces disruption in the linear narrative. This disruption is manifest in a series of shifts occurring on different levels of the novel. Thus, as we have seen, there is displacement of contextual origin in the shift from intertext to intertext. In addition, as we shall now briefly consider, there is shift in the framework of the narrative. Part of this function of "éclat de narration" has already been examined: that is, the shift of narratorial identity and the ambiguity which is thereby created. Another type of shift in narrative framework is what Ricardou has called the principle of "réalités variables, la règle selon laquelle, dans un texte, un "réel" se révèle "virtuel", ou inversement, par un coup d'écriture." <sup>59</sup> An example of this principle in La Bataille de Pharsale is the photograph of Van Velden's studio showing O. (uncle Charles) and the model sitting side by side. The passage culminates with the picture suddenly "coming to life" and the model's words reveal the self-conscious irony of the text:

La jambe de la jeune fille touche celle de  
O. La main de O. repose sur la cuisse de la  
jeune fille. D'un geste vif celle-ci remonte  
sa jupe et la main de O. se trouve au contact  
de la peau nue. La jeune fille dit Allons-  
nous-en ils sont tous saouls. (p.196)

Thus, the element of visual art and the references to space and its perception provide an effective "setting" for the shifts in narrative framework. Another such example can be found in part one where the narrator's description of himself falling from a horse while being pursued by the Germans is transformed into a description of a wrestling match which in turn changes into a description of a painting:

Puis je le vis cabré au-dessus de moi [...]

j'aurais pu compter les clous chacun des quatre  
trous pour les crampons closes qui s'immobilisent  
tout à coup et dont on garde l'image précise:  
ainsi avant que l'arbitre siffle celui au maillot  
rose renversé sur le dos les quatre fers en l'air  
[...7] et l'autre au-dessus de lui en l'air figure  
volante à peu près dans la même position [...7]  
comme un cheval ruant les pieds ayant déjà quitté  
le sol le glaive étincelant qu'il tient dans une  
main pointé vers la gorge [...7] (pp.60-1)

The ironic recognition of the displacement, "l'image précise" <sup>60</sup> and  
the contradictory use of the colon and the connective "ainsi", draws  
the reader's attention to the "frame breaks" or points of transformation  
between one description and the next. Laurent Jenny quotes this  
series of shifts in support of his claim that the disruption of the  
narrative in La Bataille de Pharsale is counteracted by the homo-  
geneity of the fragments:

La chronologie peut disparaître et le récit  
devenir lacunaire pourvu qu'une unité se  
dégage finalement, qu'une construction s'opère,  
où les matériaux intertextuels pourront prendre  
leur place. Telle est la technique de Claude  
Simon - déjà si éprouvée qu'elle paraît classique-  
dans son roman La Bataille de Pharsale. Le texte se  
constitue lentement de blocs représentatifs non  
isotopes. De ces fragments, une unité se dégage,  
soit par le jeu d'analogies accessoires - ainsi  
plusieurs scènes liées par une simple analogie  
d'attitudes: le surplomb d'un joueur de football  
sur un adversaire à terre, d'un guerrier sur un  
ennemi, d'un amant sur sa maîtresse - soit par les  
liens narratifs lentement établis entre les épisodes,  
repris, prolongés, noués [...7] <sup>61</sup>

Jenny's error is in separating the associations of the intertextual  
fragments from the novel's "own narrative". This error is all the  
more blatant since the example quoted by the critic is itself a series  
of shifts between the narrative and a fragment of pictorial intertext-  
uality. The fragments do not merely combine on their own but with  
the text. In the passage we have just quoted, the three descriptions  
are linked, as Jenny says, by the positions of the figures in each

case: a man (or a horse) falling on top of another man. But what is crucial is that the construction of the passage produces a transformation which takes the form of an inversion in the description. The horse in the first sequence is turned into a "comparant" or part of a simile in the third sequence, "comme un cheval". The transition is produced by the metaphor in the second sequence, "les quatre fers en l'air". A similar phenomenon occurs at the end of the novel where the shift of metaphor this time moves in the opposite direction:

Les deux corps sont toujours aussi immobiles  
que de la pierre. Leur couleur grisâtre ne les  
distingue pas de l'espace grisâtre, lui aussi  
pétrifié, dans lequel ils sont sculptés. (p.266)

It is by no means a question of the lovers "really" turning into statues through some sort of metamorphosis. It is the writing which is at work, and it is the descriptions which form the tissue of associations and dissociations. The metaphor has become literal:

De temps à autre une pellicule de marbre,  
une joue, une saillie, parfois une épaule,  
un coude, plus rarement un membre tout entier,  
s'effrite et tombe en poussière. Toutefois  
les contours des corps restent toujours lisibles.  
Une plaque de peau détachée de la poitrine  
laisse voir à nu sa texture interne compliquée,  
creusée de concavités, de sinuosités, de  
minuscules excavations, de sinus. (p.267)

Thus, the frame of a human body, like the frame of a Poussin, or a della Francesca, or an Ucello, is a variant of the motif of a frame of associations, all of which are "readable". Equally, the three parts of the cartoon strip near the start of the novel are presented "dans leur ordre de lecture". But the most interesting example of the fusion between the "scriptural" and the "pictorial" is in the description of the pattern of the dress of a woman standing in the corridor of the train:

Me demandant ce qui provoquait cette impression de  
relief à la fin je me rendis compte qu'un troisième  
fil gris celui-là jouait dans le tissu des losanges

étant de trois couleurs noirs, blancs et gris de sorte que leur combinaison dessinait comme certains carrelages de petits cubes en perspective accolés les uns aux autres et qui selon la façon dont on les lisait horizontalement verticalement ou en oblique semblaient tour à tour saillir ou s'enfoncer à l'intérieur d'un espace à trois dimensions cela jusqu'au vertige <sup>47</sup>  
(pp.160-1)

This process of oscillation (like the reading of a Necker cube) is produced by the combination of the connotations of reading and of visual perception: the synthesis is the "reading" or the "decipherment" of the associations of the text. The effect of the "scriptural" on the "pictorial" is to undermine the immediacy of the "signifiant" and to stress its relation within a general system of signification.<sup>62</sup> Conversely, the effect of the "pictorial" on the "scriptural" is to undermine the traditional dominance of the "signifié" in writing and to open up the possibilities of association through the repetition of motifs and the polysemic layering of the text. It is as a sign of this fusion that the text is pervaded with ideograms, italics, capital letters, and Greek lettering.

In conclusion, we may note that our analysis of La Bataille de Pharsale has uncovered two main misleading tendencies in the poetics of intertextuality. The first is the overwhelming temptation to fall in the "livre comme objet" trap when dealing with the "metagraphical" aspect of writing, as in the case of J. Dubois and his fellow rhetoricians:

Ces phénomènes sont moins utiles qu'il n'y paraît au premier abord: le texte est aussi un objet et la lecture n'est pas une opération purement linguistique: celui qui prend connaissance d'un texte peut être impressionné non seulement par l'ordonnance des mots, mais aussi par le format et la couleur des caractères le grain du papier, la mise en pages. L'art s'est parfois servi de ces caractéristiques.

Qu'on s'en souvienne des caligrammes qui ont  
pris leurs lettres de noblesse chez Tablais,  
Lewis Carroll, et Apollinaire. 63

The same misconception, paradoxically, dogs Laurent Jenny's objection  
to the use of *pictograms* in Simon's novel:

Ainsi Simon, dans La Bataille de Pharsale,  
remplace le mot "chemise" par une vignette de  
petite dimension, représentant l'objet sans  
déranger l'ordonnance des lignes. L'image est à  
la mesure de la typographie et de son  
dépouillement. Elle est non seulement pauvre  
visuellement, mais aussi en raison de son  
insertion dans une phrase qui lui retire  
toute valeur autre que symbolique, et l'inclut  
dans une syntaxe [E..] La verbalisation se  
présente donc comme une "mise à la mesure" des  
signes empruntés. C'est d'abord vrai typographiquement,  
puisque la reprise d'un énoncé dans un texte  
littéraire ne se fait jamais avec les caractères  
d'imprimerie originaux. Le travail de verbalisation  
s'efforce par ailleurs de réduire tous les corps  
étrangers non verbaux qui peuvent surgir dans un  
texte. 64

The same basic philosophical dependence on the concept of "immanence"  
underlies both positions. In the case of Dubois and his colleagues,  
they fail to realize that the print of a book can only have  
significance for the reader if it is unusual and conflicts with the  
normal use of print, as in the examples of italics in La Bataille  
de Pharsale. The example of the "caligrammes" surely makes this point  
clearly. There is no significance in the normal linear ordering of  
words on the page. Thus meaning or significance is not a matter of  
essence but of association. Jenny too is deceived by the notion of  
"immanence" (although he denies this in his article) when he talks  
of the "verbalized pictograms". Pictograms in novels, like words  
in paintings,<sup>65</sup> (and like the "ready-made" objects for the  
Surrealists)<sup>66</sup> are dependent on their contexts for their significance.  
They do not lose any "properties" when they shift context, but they

gain a "new context".

The second great temptation in the poetics of intertextuality is at the opposite pole of the critical spectrum: the inclination to treat the pastiche element of intertextuality as parody. The fault here is due to an excessive eagerness to interpret, to discern the author's voice. Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon thus interprets the metagraphical translation of the passage from Jodome et Gomorrhe (pp.178-9), a phenomenon which can also be found in the latter part of La Route des Flandres, as a "send-up" of sentimentality.<sup>67</sup> Strangely enough the same critic chooses to take the fragments from Elie Faure seriously and ignores the words "incurable bêtise française" which follow one of their appearances. Van Rossum-Guyon's problem is that she confuses intertextuality with influence and thus concludes her article by saying that Claude Simon "goes beyond" Proust.<sup>68</sup> The play of intertextuality is precisely to undermine the confidence of interpretation. Even the passages which act as "mise en abyme" and seem to be directly *referring* to the means of production of the novel itself cannot be interpreted too complacently, as in the following lines self-consciously *referring* to the opacity of the "signifiant":

Rien d'autre que quelques signes sans  
consistance matérielle comme tracés sur  
de l'air assemblés conservés copiés  
traversant les couches incolores du temps  
des siècles à une vitesse foudroyante remontant  
des profondeurs et venait crever à la surface  
comme des bulles vides comme des bulles et rien  
d'autre Clair pour qui ne cherche pas à  
l'approfondir / 7 (p.91)

The final comment "Clair pour qui ne cherche pas à l'approfondir", is itself borrowed from the Latin scholar Heusey *referring* to an apparent paradox in a passage from Caesar. Heusey's comment is brought into La Bataille de Pharsale by way of a school textbook on the



different versions of the historic battle. The use of the sentence is interesting since its meaning and its function interlock. The self-reflexive act of criticism is itself a motif repeated throughout the book: "La signification de cette allégorie est obscure" (p.241). The creation of motifs (in this case the motif is a metacritical one) serves to undermine the interpretative function of reading. We can no longer take the comment on Elie Laure at face value.

In conclusion, we can state that intertextuality in La Bataille de Pharsale is the activity by which the reader constructs the invisible text which is not "present on the page" or "immanent in the book" but which is dependent on the associations and patterns produced at each specific reading. In the words of Gerard Genette,

Le temps des oeuvres n'est pas le temps défini de l'écriture, mais le temps indéfini de la lecture et de la mémoire. Le sens des livres est devant eux et non derrière, il est en nous: un livre n'est pas un sens tout fait, une révélation que nous avons à subir, c'est une réserve de formes qui attendent leur sens, c'est "l'imminence d'une révélation qui ne se produit pas", et que chacun doit produire lui-même. 69

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### PART III

## MATERIALITY

## Chapter One

### The Materiality of Fiction.

The concept of "materiality" touches on three separate levels in a work of fiction. Firstly, in terms of traditional literary criticism, "materiality" can be said to be linked with "objectivity": that is, an obsessive description of the "external world" unmediated by a subjective consciousness. The "nouveau roman" was, for a while, considered by some as a movement of "chosisme" or "l'école du regard". Thus Vivian Mercier claims that one of the most important characteristics of Simon's novels is the focus on the "minutiae of life":

As a result, "things are there" in Simon's novels, often endowed with an intrinsic importance unrelated to their symbolic value for the human mind that perceives them.<sup>1</sup>

Equally, R.-M. Albérès has pointed to the "superficial realism" of Robbe-Grillet's novels as the trade-mark of the "nouveau roman":

Le fondateur de l'école, Alain Robbe-Grillet, modifie notre vision en donnant plus d'importance aux objets qu'aux êtres. <sup>1</sup> On se trouve alors en face d'un procédé: refuser toute "psychologie", et évoquer, assez arbitrairement, une aventure humaine, uniquement par le moyen des objets qui l'entourent et la cernent. <sup>2</sup>

It should be evident at this point of the thesis that such an interpretation of the "nouveau roman" and the theoretical assumptions upon which it is based are false. The "objective", "impersonal", "geometrical" reality which the "nouveaux romanciers" are supposed to describe is just as fictive as the "personal", "subjective", "anthropomorphic" presence of narratorial consciousness. As Robbe-Grillet remarks in Jour un nouveau roman:

Le souci de précision qui confine parfois au délire (ces notions si peu visuelles de "droite" et de "gauche", ces comptages, ces mensurations, ces repères géométriques) ne parvient pas à empêcher le monde d'être mouvant jusque dans ses aspects les plus matériels, et même au sein de son apparente immobilité. Il ne s'agit plus ici de temps qui coule, puisque paradoxalement les gestes ne sont au contraire donnés que figés dans l'instant. C'est la matière elle-même qui est à la fois solide et instable, à la fois présente et rêvée, étrangère à l'homme et sans cesse en train de s'inventer dans l'esprit de l'homme. Tout l'intérêt des pages descriptives - c'est-à-dire la place de l'homme dans ces pages - n'est donc plus dans la chose décrite, mais dans le mouvement même de la description. <sup>3</sup>

Robbe-Grillet's analysis is particularly relevant to the novels of Claude Simon where passages containing several references to spatial positioning are abundant. For instance, Simon has said that the original title for Les Corps Conducteurs was "Propriétés de quelques figures, géométriques ou non". <sup>4</sup> In the following lines taken from that novel, the repetition of words *referring* to the spatial positioning of the metro exit exceeds any serious striving for topographical exactitude and results in parody:

L'entrée du métro [...] s'ouvre dans le trottoir  
parallèlement au sens de la rue, à côté de la  
caféteria au coin de l'avenue [...] (p.100)

As opposed to the fixity of an "objective" presence of external reality, Robbe-Grillet speaks of a "movement of description". What, precisely, is he alluding to? The novelist is here *referring* to the second level of "materiality": that of language and composition. The analogy with cinema appeals to Robbe-Grillet precisely because the material of the composition (the sound and the pictures) is constantly perceptible to the spectator while conventional novels seem, for the reader, to be composed of "transparent" writing. <sup>5</sup> Jean Ricardou concurs

by saying that focus on either of these levels of "materiality" excludes the other: in traditional novels, the illusion of "objectivity" or faithful reproduction of external reality denied the reader any consciousness of the compositional level of the text, and, conversely, the modern novel which focusses on the process of its composition contains no description of "real objects". The "nouveau roman", therefore, is directly opposed to the realist aesthetic which Ricardou recognizes as being, paradoxically, "une activité idéaliste":

Donner au lecteur l'impression d'un contact avec les choses et actions mêmes, c'est en même temps lui faire oublier qu'il est en contact avec un texte [...]. L'illusion réaliste occulte la matière constituante en la réduisant à une hallucination proportionnée à la matière signifiante et occulte la matière signifiante en faisant prendre cette hallucination pour la matière constituante qu'elle a occultée. 6

For Ricardou, the modern text liberates the "signifiant" from the hegemony of the "signifié", resulting in a work structured by a "polysémie galopante". 7

The concept of text as materiality leads on to the third level of application of this notion. Referring to the composition of Leçon de choses, Claude Simon draws on an analogy with a standard formula in mathematics:

Très souvent mon travail rappelle une expression couramment employée dans la géométrie euclidienne: c'est "considérons telle ou telle figure (triangle, cercle, carré etc.) et cherchons quelles en sont les propriétés."

Eh bien, il me semble que mon travail c'est exactement cela: prendre une "figure" (n'importe laquelle: exemple le "généralisme" - la description de la pièce en ruines - de leçon de choses et examiner, explorer toutes ses "propriétés", c'est-à-dire quelles autres images, formes, cette "figure" initiale a, dans et par la langue, la propriété de susciter, de faire surgir, de s'assembler. 8

The properties of a literary object, therefore, are not physical but linguistic and associative. The significance of an object in fiction is as much produced by its name as by any of its other features. Thus Simon states that the transporting powers of Proust's "madeleine" are present in the word itself:

La saveur d'une madeleine (c'est-à-dire la qualité d'une certaine sensation - inséparable, doit-on le dire, de la saveur du mot madeleine: sa matière, sa morphologie molle, détremée (ma ... eleine) dans laquelle s'enfonce, dure, la dent du d), transporte Proust, à travers le temps et l'espace, d'un lieu dans un autre. 9

Names of characters are often "evocative" in this way. One need only think of the properties of sound and colour in the name "Germantes" for Marcel in A la recherche du temps perdu, or in the name "Corinne" for Georges in La Route des Flandres. Simon's novels focus not only on the names of characters but also on those of objects. Indeed more generally, it is the paronomastic quality of language which lies at the heart of all of Simon's more recent work. 10

Paradoxically, it is the very focus on the "properties" of objects in Simon's fiction which subverts the mimetic or "realist" perspective in literature and actuates the generative flow of the writing. 11 The examination of "properties" may be extended to another aspect of textual activity: that of reading. Consideration of this third type of "materiality" will occupy the attention of the remainder of this chapter and will form the focus of chapter two which is devoted to an analysis of Les Corps conducteurs.

If Claude Simon, qua "scripteur", considers the "properties" of the "objects" in his novel and is thereby led, by a process of association, into describing other objects, the reader who examines these associations is thereby led, through a process of extraction, into creating other

associations. The latter can be called "isotopies".

The concept of "isotopy" as outlined by A.-J. Greimas can be reformulated as "semantic context". Greimas gives an example of the workings of isotopies by quoting the joke centring on the pun on "toilettes". Two guests at a lavish dinner-party engage in conversation. One of them remarks: "Ah! belle soirée, hein? Repas magnifique, et puis jolies toilettes hein?" His interlocutor retorts: "Ça je n'en sais rien ... je n'y suis pas allé".<sup>12</sup> The joke relies on a clash of two isotopies: "dress" and "toilet facilities". The important feature of Greimas's concept is that an isotopy is only perceptible within a system of binary opposition (for example, "adultes"/"enfants", "majoritaires"/"minoritaires", "humains"/"animaux"). The importance of this concept can be *gauged* by the fact that the clash of two heterogeneous isotopies need not be restricted to language but can also be found in painting. Max Ernst comments on the "poetic effect" produced by the juxtaposition of two heterogeneous objects in paintings such as Magritte's "L'Etat de Grâce" (1959).

Une réalité toute faite, dont la naïve destination a l'air d'avoir été fixée une fois pour toutes (un parapluie) se trouvant subitement en présence d'une autre réalité très distante et non moins absurde (une machine à coudre) en un lieu où toutes deux doivent se sentir dépaysées (sur une table de dissection), échappera par ce fait même à sa naïve destination et à son identité; elle passera de son faux absolu nouveau, vrai et poétique: parapluie et machine à coudre feront l'amour.<sup>13</sup>

Max Ernst's recognition of the feeling of "*dépaysement*" produced by the marriage of two heterogeneous objects in painting is mirrored by Victor Chklevski's description of the feeling of strangeness or "ostranenia" arising from the metaphorical use of language in poetry:<sup>14</sup>

Chez les poètes, les objets s'insurgent, rejetant leurs anciens noms et se chargent d'un sens

supplémentaire avec le nom nouveau. Le poète se sert des images, des tropes pour faire des comparaisons; il appelle par exemple le feu une fleur rouge, ou il applique une nouvelle épithète à l'ancien mot, ou bien il dit comme Baudelaire que la chorégraphie avait ses jambes en l'air comme une femme lubrique. Ainsi le poète accomplit un déplacement sémantique, il sort la notion de la série sémantique où elle se trouvait et il la place à l'aide d'autres mots (d'un trope) dans une autre série sémantique; nous sentons ainsi la nouveauté, la mise de l'objet dans une nouvelle série. Le nouveau mot est mis sur l'objet comme un nouveau vêtement. L'enseigne est enlevée. 15

Chklovski's term "série sémantique" can thus be seen to be closely related to Greimas's concept of isotopy, the difference being that the latter operates on the syntactic or phraseological level of the text while the former applies to a wider scope of interpretation. The movement of "déplacement sémantique" or "clash of isotopies" noted by Chklovski is precisely, as Claude Simon says, the activity of metaphor:

(Mais peut-être est-ce là ce que vous entendez par le terme "déplacer"? Chklovski définit le fait littéraire par: "le transfert d'un objet de sa perception habituelle dans la sphère d'une nouvelle perception" - par ailleurs, métaphore vient, comme vous le savez, du grec μεταφορά qui signifie transport.) 16

This movement of transference is precisely the movement of description *reference* to by Robbe-Grillet in the passage quoted earlier in this chapter. However, the value of the concept of "isotopy" is that it shifts the perspective from one of composition to one of reading. Indeed, the main weakness in Greimas's semantic analysis of fiction is that the critic proceeds from a linguistic perspective and not from an interpretative one. As Jonathan Culler perceptively notes, Greimas's attempt to arrive at a "total meaning of a text" through observation of "a set of signifiers" 17 is doomed to failure, as is Barthes's even more ambitious claim that "the isotopies of a text should account for all



possible coherent readings".<sup>18</sup> Such a pseudo-scientific approach to the activity of reading is both erroneous and undesirable. But Culler's alternative "subjectivist" view that isotopies are produced by "expectations which lead readers to look for certain forms of organization in a text and to find them"<sup>19</sup> is not much more convincing.

Both extreme positions are evidence of the theoretical pitfalls of a poetics which is made from a perspective in which the domains of creation and criticism are kept apart. However, a poetics of fiction which acknowledges the fact that critical concepts do not merely describe works of fiction but that they are in turn modified and transformed by them is formulated outside the subjectivist/objectivist opposition. Hence, the transformations in the concept of "isotopy" which arise from a reading of Les Corps conducteurs divest it from its function as critical or "scientific" grid. The concept of "isotopy" is crucial to a poetics of the "materiality" of reading because it deals with the way in which a reader organizes or "makes sense of" the material before him. However, a novel such as Les Corps conducteurs which elicits a new form of reading also produces a transformation of this vital concept. Indeed it is by transforming the concept of "isotopy" (by the use, as we shall see in the following chapter, of "description blocks" and by the production of instances of "descriptive confusion") that a new type of reading is evoked.

The process of reading Claude Simon's later novels, therefore, is neither "scientific" and exhaustive nor random and impressionistic but is a creative activity which is prompted by the structure of textual associations. The traditionally separate activities of reading and writing are thus brought together. As Ricardou says:

Loin de s'opposer dans un face à face irréductible,  
pratique et théorie sont les deux phases nécessaires  
du procès de production.<sup>20</sup>

## Chapter Two

### Currents of Description in *Les Corps conducteurs*.

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(Et même une syllabe commune à deux  
noms différents suffisait à ma mémoire  
- comme à un électricien qui se  
contente du moindre corps bon conducteur  
- pour rétablir le contact entre  
Albertine et mon cœur.)

#### La Fugitive


#### 1. Fragmentation and articulation.

In their respective articles on *Les Corps conducteurs*, Claude DuVerlie, Jean-Claude Raillon and Jean Ricardou have each focussed on a particular pattern of association and presented it as the fundamental, underlying structure of the novel. For DuVerlie the Orion myth is the unifying element in the novel;<sup>1</sup> for Raillon the "scène générante de copulation" is the common ground, the point of unification of the different fictional groupings;<sup>2</sup> for Ricardou the novel is a "fiction où la sexualité "ne marche pas", roman, en somme, "de la jambe coupée"". <sup>3</sup> The obvious comment on this disagreement is that, on their own didactic terms, at least two of the analyses must be incorrect thus indicating that perception of the "basic structure" is not very straightforward. It follows from this that the element of continuity or unification is not as striking as all three critics suggest.

The second observation one can make from comparing the three articles is that this very ability to earmark a unifying structure is viewed by the three critics themselves in a different light. DuVerlie interprets the "continuity" of *Les Corps conducteurs* as a mark of its "intentions humanistes" and consequently as a weakness which he contrasts with

the "super-formalisme" of the "discontinuous" Orion aveugle;<sup>4</sup> for Raillon the "copulation des corps" together with the "copulation des lettres" forms the framework for the generative production of the text; in Ricardou's analysis the fact that one can discern a dominant unifying narrative sequence as well as a dominant theme is proof that the novel is unlike Triptyque which he describes as "pur roman de la discoh rence enfin conquise, parfait exemple de tr s vive modernit ".<sup>5</sup> Ignoring for the time being the question as to whether any of the three analyses of the novel is correct or not, one can note the explicit preoccupation of all three with the antithetical concepts of "association" and "iragmentation". They all agree as to the importance of these two notions, although they each attach different values to them. The argument of this chapter will be that analysis of "descriptive writing" must focus on the concept of "articulation". Moreover, such an analysis would take the form of what one might call "textual semantics". However, this does not mean that Les Corps conducteurs is important because of the "meanings" which can be read into the patterns and associations woven by the text but that the novel innovates in the way it produces textual signification.

The most rigorous critical work on Les Corps conducteurs (just as in the cases of La Route des Flandres and La Bataille de Pharsale) has been undertaken by Jean Ricardou in two separate instances: the first, entitled "'Claude Simon', textuellement" was a paper delivered at the 1974 Cerisy colloquium on Claude Simon; the second, an expansion of the argument which was sketched at Cerisy, is a chapter entitled "le dispositif osiriaque" contained in the critic's latest book, Nouveaux probl mes du roman.<sup>6</sup> In "'Claude Simon', textuellement" Ricardou notes that Les Corps conducteurs is "l'effet de deux

fonctionnements contradictoires: d'une part, la fragmentation, d'autre part l'articulation".<sup>7</sup> Fragmentation can either be present as "coupures intra-séquentielles" (which are instances of digression within a particular narrative sequence and are provoked by traditional metaphor, comparison or alternative),<sup>8</sup> and "ruptures interséquentielles" which are instances of interruption of one narrative sequence by another and are provoked by productive metaphor on the level of "signifiants"). The opening sentence of Les Corps conducteurs contains two "coupures intra-séquentielles": the dummies' legs in the shop window are likened to the legs of a team of dancers, "comme si on les avait empruntées à un de ces bataillons de danseuses", and to an advertisement for women's stockings, "ou encore  l'un de ces dessins de publicité". The extent to which "coupures intra-séquentielles" disturb the narrative structure is measured by the length of the digression. The first "rupture inter-séquentielle" is produced by the arrival, in the third sentence, of the second narrative sequence: "L'infirmier (ou le jeune interne) tient sous son bras, comme un paquet, une jambe coupée". Both types of fragmentation are produced, as Ricardou says, by "l'irruption du similaire".<sup>9</sup> One of the many common denominators of the first two narrative sequences is the word "jambe".<sup>10</sup> Equally, there are two types of articulation: metonymic articulation which is the unification of two or more initially separate narrative sequences, and thematic articulation which is the unification of two or more seemingly unrelated motifs and themes. An example of metonymic articulation is the "framing" of the second narrative sequence within the third narrative sequence: the description of the "jeunes internes" and the bearded surgeon on the point of operating on a laughing young woman is "framed" as a cartoon picture hanging on the wall of the doctor's

consulting room which forms part of the third narrative segment:

Sur l'un des murs du cabinet de consultation est accroché un dessin sous verre représentant une théorie de jeunes carabins hilares armés de divers instruments chirurgicaux et s'avançant à la suite d'un patron barbu vers une table d'opération où est étendue une jeune femme nue qui rit de tous ses dents. (p.10)

It is less easy to summarize the specific activity of thematic articulation, but in a general sense, according to Ricardou, the theme of illness forms the "obsessional pivot" of the novel. Ricardou supports his argument in a more concrete way in "Le Dispositif osiriaque" by charting the "arborescence" or hierarchical interdependence of the novel's themes and motifs. This will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

"'Claude Simon', textuellement" ends with the conclusion that although the process of articulation can be used to produce a more fruitful effect than that of unification (as it is in La Jalousie and La Prise de Constantinople), in Les Corps conducteurs it tends towards a unitary composition:

Dans Les Corps conducteurs, ainsi qu'il arrive souvent chez Simon, les divers secteurs conduits à s'articuler métonymiquement appartiennent aussi à des unités spatiales très différentes: disons, pour être bref, une marche dans une ville nord-américaine et un congrès dans une ville sud-américaine, seulement il n'est pas impossible de reconnaître un secteur dominant avec cette marche de l'homme malade dans la ville, par laquelle s'ouvre et se clôt le livre à laquelle les autres secteurs parviennent assez bien à s'articuler. 11

In sum, the dominance of metonymic and thematic articulation turns the novel into a type of jig-saw puzzle where the reader is initially confronted with a mass of disconnected fragments but which he can ultimately piece together to reconstruct a linear and hierarchical order.

There are three main problems arising out of Ricardou's argument.

Firstly, it is not entirely satisfactory to describe articulation and fragmentation as two contradictory textual functions: by pinpointing precisely what is being articulated and precisely what is being fragmented we will discover that their relationship is causal. Moreover, it would be more precise to define articulation as an activity and fragmentation as a state of being or "disposition" in the French sense of the word. Therefore, instead of saying that there are two sorts of fragmentation and two sorts of articulation one should rather enumerate four types of articulation. Fictional articulation is the "framing" (or association by contiguity) of different narrative sequences together. Thematic articulation is the hierarchical association of different motifs and themes. Metaphorical articulation is the association of similar "signifiés". Paronomastic articulation is the association of similar "signifiants". The four categories do, however, split up into two groups. The first two form what one might call referential articulation and the second two form what one might call literal articulation.<sup>12</sup> The first two create a homogeneity or unification of narrative by associating different sequences and themes. The second two create a fragmentation of narrative by associating similar "signifiés" and "signifiants". It seems logical to re-name Ricardou's "fragmentation métaphorique" and "fragmentation paronomastique" by substituting "fragmentation" with "articulation" since, by Ricardou's definition, the one "met en jeu des similitudes des signifiés" and the other "met en jeu une similitude des signifiants". Equally, it seems necessary to re-name "metonymic articulation" as "fictional articulation" since the use of the word "metonymic" might in this case lead to confusion. Whereas in the cases of metaphorical and paronomastic articulation the associations are linguistic and are produced by,

among others, actual metaphors, in metonymic articulation the associations of contiguity are not linguistic, they do not employ the use of actual metonyms. It is the segments of narrative which are placed in contiguous relation with one another. In other words, the articulation here is on the level of the writing. The relationship between referential and literal articulation is one of inverted proportion: when fictional and thematic articulation predominate (as in the traditional novel) metaphorical and paronomastic articulation are subdued; when metaphorical and paronomastic articulation predominate (as in Simon's text) fictional and thematic articulation are subdued.

The second problem which arises from Ricardou's argument is clearly related to the problem of the definitions of articulation and fragmentation which we have just considered. "Coupures intra-séquentielles" and "ruptures inter-séquentielles" are two forms of fragmentation: they differ only by degree, the second being more fundamental than the first. Both are produced by "la loi métaphorique" (in other words by literal articulation) but, as we have seen, "coupures" are produced by traditional metaphor, comparison, or alternative and "ruptures" are produced by structural metaphor and paronomasia.<sup>13</sup> Thus the metaphorical associations producing "coupures" are asserted by the writing (as in the first example, "comme si on les avait empruntées à un de ces bataillons de danseuses"); and the metaphorical associations producing "ruptures" are made by the reader (as in the number of common denominators linking the first and second narrative sequences). However, Ricardou fails to note in "Claude Simon", textuellement that one can draw a parallel between these two forms of fragmentation and two forms of articulation: intra-sequential connections or "fusions" and inter-sequential connections or "confusions". "Fusions" are what Ricardou calls "metonymic articulation"

or the "rencontre de deux séquences".<sup>14</sup> Thus the "framing" of the second narrative sequence (the description of the surgical operation) within the third narrative sequence (the visit to the doctor's ) by situating the former as a description of a cartoon hanging on the doctor's wall may, by our definition, be called an instance of narrative "fusion". An example of "descriptive confusion" is the "contamination" of the description of the sexual scene by the description of the anatomical diagram. The man, sitting on the bed where they have just made love, looks at the woman who stands in front of him wrapped in a towel and holding a bowl of coffee:

Le bol s'abaisse et il peut voir alors le visage tout entier. Son regard toujours fixé sur lui, elle dit doucement Non. Non ce n'est pas possible. Sur le mur de la salle de bains le rectangle de soleil vire lentement de l'orange au jaune. Barrant la poitrine d'une droite horizontale à hauteur des aisselles la serviette ne permet de voir que l'extrémité supérieure de l'ouverture en forme de caisse de violoncelle protégée par la plaque de plexiglas derrière laquelle on distingue de gros tubes bleus et rouges dont les branches se divisent et s'entrecroisent. (p.161)

Without examining the phenomenon too closely for the time being, a summary glance is enough for the reader to spot the interpolation of the two descriptions. The phenomenon differs from an instance of "fusion" since it is not a question of "framing" one of the sequences within the other. Neither is it an instance of "coupure" since the relationship between the two descriptions is not metaphorical. The man is not looking at the woman's body as if he were looking at an anatomical drawing. No analogy or comparison is being made. While articulation in instances of narrative "fusion" occurs only on the referential level, in instances of descriptive "confusion" articulation occurs only on the literal level. In other words, unlike the case of "fusion" where



the sequences are "framed" within one another, "confusion" is the interpolation of one description within another. In sum, "fusion" is the relation of contiguity between specific narrative sequences produced by the unifying narrative macro-structure. "Confusion" is the dislocation of narrative produced by the contiguity, or literal articulation, between parts of different units of description.

The third problem arising out of Ricardou's argument is the most fundamental: his analysis is reductive in so far as it makes no qualitative distinction between what we have named "narrative sequences" and "blocks of description". Ricardou has produced the neatest definition of narrative sequences: "séries d'éléments fictionnels référentiellement cohérents".<sup>15</sup> The element of referential cohesion is crucial. A narrative sequence is a strand or line of narrative which is held together either by a logic of time or setting, or by a single narrative framework, as in the case of memory. The segments within a particular sequence need not follow one another chronologically but the possibility of piecing them together must always exist. The contradictions created by the interplay of sequences may be called, to borrow from Ricardou, narrative "discoherence".<sup>16</sup> Examples of narrative discoherence taken from Triptyque will be discussed in part IV, chapter two. A narrative sequence, therefore, is intrinsic to all fiction. All novels have narrative sequences, although most conventional novels have only one.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, blocks of description are a product of composition. Conventional novels, where all description is subservient to the logic of narrative, do not have description blocks. The most important distinction between narrative sequences and description blocks is that whereas it is possible to say that the

former can be found "within" a novel, it is not so with the latter. A description block is constructed by the reader who assembles different descriptive units, or "referents", into different categories. These referents express a certain freedom from the hierarchy of the narrative structure since they do not "belong" to any particular narrative sequence. Often they have several contradictory frames; sometimes they are totally unframed, floating in a narrative void. Instances of description blocks are always referentially static, with no development internally or from one repetition to the next, which is why the referents are often in the form of paintings or photographs.

In short, narrative sequences denote progress through spatio-temporal change, while description blocks provide information through accumulation of data. Just as instances of sequences do not always follow one another in chronological order, so too instances of description blocks either provide additional data or variants. The relations between instances of sequences (or narrative segments) are metonymic (along an axis of referential contiguity); in other words, the different instances can be assembled into a coherent narrative sequence. The relations between instances of description blocks are synecdochic (along an axis of literal contiguity): in other words, each specific instance (part) stands for the description block (whole) to which it belongs. The distinction between the relations of metonymy and synecdoche is based on the one made by Gérard Genette in Figures 111 where synecdoche is defined as involving the aspect of "inclusion" which need not be spatial but is always a logical relationship between part and whole, and metonymy is defined as a relationship of contiguity between different parts of the same whole. <sup>18</sup>

De même pourra-t-on lire ad libitum, dans la figure par l'attribut (soit "couronne" pour monarque), une métonymie ou une synecdoque, selon que l'on considère, par exemple, la couronne comme simplement liée au monarque, ou comme faisant partie de lui, en vertu de l'axiome implicite: pas de monarque sans couronne. On voit alors qu'à la limite toute métonymie est convertible en synecdoque par appel à l'ensemble supérieur, et toute synecdoque en métonymie par recours aux relations entre parties constituantes. 19

The following passage from Les Corps conducteurs provides a good example of the difference between the metonymic interaction of instances of narrative sequences and the synecdochic interaction of instances of description blocks:

Le portier, maintenant revenu vers le tambour dont il maintient d'une main l'un des panneaux, sa casquette tenue par son autre main devant sa poitrine, observe la difficile progression de la dame sur l'immensité rouge du tapis. A l'autre bout du fil la voix claire et joyeuse de l'enfant répète Allô? Allô? Au-dessus du plateau de nuages on peut voir la lune dans le ciel vide, comme une pastille blanche pas tout à fait ronde. Entre le lapin couché sur le flanc et la main de l'enfant la ficelle détendue serpente sur le trottoir en courbes molles. Le Serpent est une constellation équatoriale dont le tracé est dessiné par de belles étoiles distribuées sur une large étendue du ciel. Surgissant tout à coup des nuages, l'arête enneigée d'une montagne s'élève au-dessus de l'avion, d'une incroyable minceur, aiguë avec ses vertigineux dévers de glace étincelant dans le soleil, presque verticaux, inviolés, et son échine de rochers déchiquetés. Elle ondule et se tord comme la nageoire dorsale d'un congé ou d'une murène émergeant un instant, luisante, dans des remous d'écume. Les nuages fouettés avec violence s'écartent, s'effilochent en écharpes grisâtres accrochées aux parois éblouissantes, les roches en dents de scie semblables aux vertèbres de quelque monstre, quelque furieux et gigantesque saurien au nom fabuleux de titan, de société minibre ou de constellation (Aconagua, Anaconda, Andromeda) se convulsant, écrasant sous son ventre de terre, ses millions de tonnes, la fange verdâtre et puante des marécages et des forêts invivables, tout en bas, sous l'étouffante couvercle de nuages. (pp.29-30)

The passage moves from one narrative sequence (describing the progression of a man walking in what seems to be a North American city), to another narrative sequence (describing the progress of an aeroplane flight), to a description block (with information on astronomy) and again to the narrative sequence of the airflight. The shifts are produced along an axis of literal contiguity (by metaphorical articulation). The associative image which acts as common denominator is the "signifié" "snake" which appears in the first sequence ("la ficelle détendue serpente"), in the description block ("Le Serpent est une constellation"), in the second narrative sequence ("Elle ondule et se tord comme la nageoire dorsale d'un congé ou d'une murène").<sup>20</sup> The function of the instances of the two sequences is to mark spatio-temporal progression. In this passage, the use of "maintenant" in the first sequences denotes temporal progression, and spatial progression is denoted in the second sequence where movement is stressed by the repetitive use of verbs often in the form of a present participle. The function of an instance of a description block is, on the other hand, different. There is no development between a particular instance and earlier ones of the same block. Instead, in the passage we have been considering, the sentence acts as an index evoking or referring to the earlier instances of the description block, the context from which it has been taken. This "recall" also has a generative function since the second appearance in this passage of the airflight sequence is under the influence of the astronomical description block. The mountains below are like "quelque monstre [...] au nom fabuleux [...] de constellation (Aconégua, Anaconda, Andromeda)". The influence is clearly metonymic stemming from the first instance of the description block where the anaconda is first mentioned (p.19).

Moreover, the metaphorical articulation of the whole passage produced by the "signifié" "serpent" can be shown to have its metonymic origin in this description block since it is here that the associative image "serpent" first appears.

Thus the differences between narrative sequences and description blocks are easily detected by the reader. The following is a list of all the narrative sequences in the novel. For the sake of brevity, the sequences will be named by alphabetical letters, and the description blocks by Roman numerals.

Sequence A is the painful progress of a man walking along the streets of, possibly, New York. The walk is interrupted by several "episodes" such as the telephone booth conversation, and the drink at the bar. The novel begins with this sequence (the description of the dummies' legs in the shop window) and ends with it (the man reaches his hotel room and collapses on the carpet).

Sequence B is the visit of a man to the doctor's. One may infer from the fact that the doctor speaks French that the visit takes place in France before or after the trip to the Americas. The first instance of this sequence is on page 8: "Le docteur lui dit de baisser son pantalon".

Sequence C is the plane journey which a man makes somewhere over the Caribbean. The exact route of this journey is unclear. The first instance of this sequence is on page 15: "L'ombre cruciforme de l'avion se déplace [.]"

Sequence D is the attendance of a writer's conference somewhere in Latin America. The first instance of this sequence is on page 33: "En dépit de son attention, il ne parvient à saisir [.]"

Sequence E is the sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. There is no mention of where this takes place. The first instance of this sequence is on page 56: "Dans la lumibre laiteuse qui entre par la fenetre . . ."

As Ricardou says, "it is not impossible" to see sequence A as dominating all the others. Indeed it may be said to contain the "seeds" from which the other sequences grow. The surgical element in sequence B may be seen to have developed from the description of the "jambes coupées" in the shop window. Sequence C has its parallel in the aeroplane advertisement in the travel agent's (p.217). Sequence D develops from the shreds of Spanish political slogans covering a palisade on the street (p.33). Sequence E is mirrored by the magazine covers in the porn shop (p.146). One can also justifiably identify the man as being the same in all five sequences, (although it is equally "not impossible" to see them as being different men). In sequences A,B,D the man is suffering from a pain in his stomach. Sequence C links up with sequence A by the fact that the destination of the flight is somewhere in America (north or south) and sequence E links up with sequence A through the possibility of identifying the woman as the one in the telephone conversation in sequence A. These intersections, being on the level of fiction or "plot", tend towards a unifying interpretation of the narrative. Other, more detailed, associations can be found in more numerous quantity, but they belong to the level of composition (of description) and often contradict the logic of the narrative, thus undoing its unificatory tendencies.

There are four main description blocks in the novel. Figure 3 is an outline of their component elements:

Figure 3

| Blocks:                      | I<br>SURGICAL<br>(pseudo-<br>sequence) | II<br>ANATOMICAL<br>(appendix to I)   | III<br>MILITARY<br>(pseudo-<br>sequence)   | IV<br>CONSTELLATION<br>(appendix to<br>III)   |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| Referents                    | 1. Cartoon                             | 1. Anatomical<br>drawing<br>2. Magazine<br>3. Optician's<br>poster<br>4. Encyclo-<br>paedic<br>information          | 1. Print or<br>stamp<br>2. Mural<br>3. Magazine<br>4. Newspaper<br>5. Toy soldiers | 1. Encyclopaedic<br>information<br>on birds,<br>stars, etc.<br>2. Magazine<br>3. Map<br>4. Vellum<br>exhibit in<br>museum<br>5. "Orion<br>Aveugle"                      |
| Frames                       | 1. Fusion with<br>seq. B               | 1. B<br>2. C<br>3. A<br>4. Unframed   | 1. Unframed<br>2. D<br>3. C<br>4. D<br>5. A  | 1. Unframed<br>2. C<br>3. A<br>4. Unframed<br>5. Unframed   |
| Instances<br>of<br>Confusion |  | P.111 with C<br>P.74 with B<br>P.68 with E<br>P.161 with E<br>P.183 with<br>block I & II<br>P.206 with<br>block III |  | P.217 with A, C,<br>block III<br>P.50 with D<br>P.57 with E<br>P.112 with<br>block III<br>P.149 with<br>block III<br>P.174 with<br>block III<br>P.212 with<br>block III |

As we have already seen, it is relatively easy to identify description blocks since their synecdochic character sets them apart from narrative sequences. Naming each block is, however, a different matter partly because the choice reveals a particular commitment by the reader on the interpretation of the novel. Furthermore, the generative power of the detail of Simon's novels, and in particular Les Corps conducteurs, deliberately obstructs any attempt to discern an order in the novel's macro-structure. On the other hand, there is a need to decide on a name since each block includes several disparate elements which are all encompassed by this classeme or "common denominator". The titles of the description blocks must therefore have as general a reference as possible. Figure 3 is not to be taken as an exhaustive list. <sup>20</sup>

As shown in Figure 3, the four description blocks can be split into two groups. Blocks I and III may be said to have "pseudo-sequential" tendencies and differ from blocks II and IV which act as "appendices" to their preceding blocks. The first block, which Ricordeau treated as a sequence, is the most cohesive since it is mainly comprised of the description of a surgical operation. This description cannot by our definition be called a narrative sequence since it is explicitly "framed" as the description of a picture hanging on the wall of the doctor's consulting room in sequence B. The first instance of this block appears on page 7:

l'infirmier (ou le jeune interne) tient sous son bras, comme un paquet, une jambe coupée.

Description block II, "anatomical description", is less cohesive in that there are several objects or "referents" of description and their corresponding "frames": the main one being the anatomical



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drawing which is also framed in sequence B. The other referents and frames are the magazine article on the human anatomy in sequence C, a poster in an optician's in sequence A. The first appearance of description block II is on page 9: "La planche représente un torse d'homme".

The second pseudo-sequence, description block III, can be called the "military description". It is less textually cohesive than the preceding descriptions. Firstly, some of its referents (especially the central one, the description of the soldiers marching through the South American forest presented as a stamp (p.39), a print (p.85), or a photo (pp.108-9)) are totally unframed, belonging to no narrative sequence. Secondly, the block covers a larger quantity of referents: the print or stamp or photo (unframed), the mural of the cavalry charge in the conference hall in sequence D, the magazine story read by the man travelling by aeroplane in sequence C, the cinema advertisement in the newspaper being read by the "proconsul" in sequence D, the toy soldiers in the shop window in sequence A, and the tourist information on South American forests given by the airline brochure in sequence C. The first instance of description block III is on page 14:

Un personnage au crâne chauve, à la longue  
barbe, le buste revêtu d'une cuirasse qui fait  
place, à partir de la taille, à une courte  
jupe, se tient debout sur une plage.

The first instance of description block IV is on page 19:

Le serpent est lové sur un tronc où ne subsiste  
plus que quelques plaques d'écorce et dont  
l'aubier mis à nu apparaît, d'un blanc jaunâtre  
comme un os.

Description block IV is the most decomposed of all four blocks. None of its referents are framed in a narrative sequence and therefore it

has the most disruptive influence on the novel as a whole. Its central referent forms what one might call a microscopic block (or block within a block) since it contains several separate motifs: information on snakes, stars, birds, butterflies. All these different referents are placed in metonymic contiguity (in a kind of constellation) although the locus of this contiguity is left ambiguous. This, as we shall see later, is precisely the nature of all the description blocks in Les Corps conducteurs: elements of description are related metonymically, without the "message" or the framework of that relation ever becoming clear. Thus description block IV is the "meeting-place" of several distinct elements, the most striking of which is Orion, Poussin's giant:

Parmi le scintillement des étoiles de différentes grandeurs qui dessinent les constellations, les centaures, les paons aux plumes couvertes d'yeux, les chèvres à queue de dragons, les loups et les aigles, la silhouette du géant se découpe en noir [.] (p.112)

The passage is clearly another example of descriptive confusion. In this case, however, the two originally separate referents (Poussin's painting and the ambiguous map or drawing) both belong to the same compositional unit: block IV. The appearance of the giant within block IV is brought about through the word "constellation" which in an earlier instance of this block was associated with the name "Orion":

La constellation d'Orion est une des plus belles de la zone équatoriale. (p.57)

Once again we find that the composition of the novel is dictated by the generative potential of the "signifiants" which form the literal dimension of the text. What effect does this have on the referential dimension? <sup>22</sup> The different elements of description block IV are assembled in metonymic contiguity as a result of the productive work

of the language. But what exactly is the mosaic in which all the pieces are fitted together? Is it a reproduction of the painted ceiling of some monument like the Sistine or the Pantheon (p.56) or an antique parchment on display in a natural history museum (p.216) or the product of the imagination of a traveller, the screen for his projected thoughts being the window of an aeroplane (p.219)? The fact that these questions cannot be answered with any degree of certainty is proof alone that Les Corps conducteurs is not dominated by a movement of articulation which binds the different narrative fragments into a unified whole, thus permitting a unitary interpretation from the reader. It may be hypothetically possible to integrate the five narrative sequences by identifying the same man in all five cases and to situate the sequences in a chronological order, but no such spatio-temporal identification is possible involving description blocks. Moreover, since all the narrative sequences are intertwined with the description blocks, making it impossible to separate the one from the other, it is "in practice" impossible to fuse all the sequences together in a unitary whole. The vital function of the description block, therefore, is to contradict or sabotage the reductive tendencies in any account of the "macro-structure" of the novel. An integrative account of the novel is only possible in a reading which is riddled with gaps of inattention coinciding with the instances of all the description blocks.

To summarize, the three main problems in Ricardou's argument are what enable him to discard Les Corps conducteurs as a modern text. Conversely, the three points (the interplay between narrative sequences and description blocks, between instances of fusion and confusion,

and between fragmentation and articulation) are what define the novel as modern text. However, the concern of this chapter is not with the defense of the modernity of Les Corps conducteurs. Such a task would not warrant the space of a chapter and it is hoped that the preceding pages are sufficient to make that point. The central preoccupation of this chapter is, as was stated at the beginning, with the patterns of association which structure the text. Ricardou concludes "'Claude Simon', textuellement" by claiming that Les Corps conducteurs is ultimately recuperable because it is dominated by the movement of articulation. The focal argument in this chapter is that articulation is not necessarily a reductive force and further, that the movement of articulation which underlies the novel constitutes the prime force of its modernity. The argument will take the form of an expansion of the three problems (or six concepts: fragmentation and articulation; narrative sequences and description blocks; fusion and confusion) outlined above. Before proceeding any further, however, we must briefly glance at his second critical study of Simon's novel.

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## 2. "Le Dispositif osirique"

This is not the place for a detailed summary or assessment of "Le Dispositif osirique". Suffice it to say that the lengthy study constitutes one of the first and most thorough works of materialist criticism.<sup>23</sup> It is also a brilliant theoretical study of the structure of the conventional novel and the extent to which Les Corps conducteurs conforms to it. Claude Simon has himself recently expressed his admiration for the work.<sup>24</sup> The most important aspect of the analysis is Ricardou's implicit acknowledgement of the need

to take theoretical account of the oscillating relationship between the writing on the page and what is produced by the reading. Thus "métaphore structurelle" can either be "actuelle (rupture accomplie nécessairement par l'écriture)" or "virtuelle (rupture accomplie éventuellement par la lecture)". In the first case the two component elements in the comparison are adjacent to one another, or in "immediate correspondence", as in the example of the eight correspondences at the start of the novel between the instances of sequence A and block I.<sup>25</sup> In the second case the two component elements are at a substantial distance from one another, the correspondence is "différée", as in the "métaphore structurelle virtuelle" "ocre" which is the colour of the plastic legs in sequence A and also reappears in the first instance of description block II, "rose ocrée", describing the anatomical poster. The "actuality" of the structural metaphor is measured by the extent to which there is "brisure". Moreover, a metaphor or paronomasia can either be "structurelle" if "on insiste sur l'organisation des séquences" or it can be "transitaire" if "on insiste sur le passage d'une séquence à l'autre", or it can be "ruptrice" if "on insiste sur la fracture d'une séquence par une autre." The same word can thus be read in three different ways. The distinction between reading and writing enables Ricardou to stress the complementarity of the relationship between articulation and fragmentation, "similitude" and "brisure":

dans la mesure où la règle de brisure suppose  
au moins une similitude, les ressemblances,  
dans une fiction aussi morcelée, sont *conduites*  
à pléthore. Tout texte soumis à la segmentation  
analogique tend au camaïeu. <sup>26</sup>

Ricardou thus re-states the opposition between articulation and

fragmentation as one between "le dispositif dimensionnel " and "le dispositif classificatoire":

La similitude provoque une brisure dans les seuls textes où l'assemblage est obtenu par la domination d'un fonctionnement qui lui est antithétique. Or, ici, les opérations d'assemblage (jonction, prolongation, continuation, segmentation) tendent clairement, toutes, à réunir les éléments référentielles selon les catégories de l'espace et du temps. Bref, l'assemblage se fait ici à partir de la prépondérance d'un dispositif dimensionnel.<sup>27</sup>

The antithesis of the "dimensionnel" is the "classificatoire" which reunifies "les éléments à partir de leurs traits communs". We may note that these notions correspond exactly with the notions of "fictional (or metonymic) articulation" and "metaphorical articulation" which were proposed earlier in this chapter. One must bear in mind that Ricardou here uses the term "articulation" in a strictly limited sense referring only to metonymic articulation, or what can be very loosely called the "development of the plot". The conflict between the "dimensionnel" and the "classificatoire" involves the use of metonymy by the former and metaphor by the latter:

Briser un assemblage spatio-temporel référentiel, soit selon les ruptures linéaires obtenues par correspondances immédiates (métaphores structurelles actuelles), soit selon les coupures obtenues par comparaisons, alternatives, et métaphores expressives), soit selon les coupures obtenues par correspondances différées (métaphores structurelles virtuelles), c'est toujours à partir de leurs traits similaires, classer ensemble deux segments spatio-temporels distincts.<sup>28</sup>

By focussing on the classificatory aspect of metaphor, Ricardou seems to lodge the responsibility entirely with the reader since it is the latter who operates the classification. Thus, even in the case of "correspondances immédiates" brought about by "métaphores structurelles

actuelles" such as "cuisse sectionnée" and "jambe coupée" where the two separate narrative segments are adjacent to one another (that is, although the "brisure" between them is "actuelle") the denotation, the creation even of their common denominator (in this case the "signifié" "coupure") is entirely the product of the act of reading, (in other words, "classes" or classificatory titles are always "virtuelles"). It is with this in mind that we can fully appreciate the following terms which Ricardou has coined and which are valuable in any rigorous attempt to examine the dialectical relationship between articulation and fragmentation which forms the basis of the relationship between reader and text. A "taxeme" is another word for "class" or "common denominator". An "arthreme" is another word for "narrative segment":

dans le domaine articulaire, le segment (fragment, séquence, sur-séquence) tire son existence de ce que l'ensemble des éléments qu'il agence peut être subsumé par l'unité d'un titre, ou, si l'on préfère, d'un arthrème. De même, la correspondance (immédiate, différée, axiale, radiante) tire son existence de ce que l'ensemble des éléments qu'elle assemble peut être subsumé par l'unité d'un titre ou, si l'on préfère, d'un taxème. 29

The conflict can thus be re-stated as being between taxemes and arthremes. Arthremes are agents of articulation in that they assemble referential or "fictional" elements within a single narrative unit. Taxemes are classificatory and consequently fragment arthremes. Arthremes are agents of narrative conjunction and taxemes are agents of narrative disjunction. But, as Ricardou notes, taxemes can themselves be articulated within a new order, can be reassembled under a new title or "taxo-arthrème". Taxo-arthremes control taxemes either by fictional articulation, as in the explicit



articulation of the taxemes of "medecine" and "coupure" within the taxo-arthreme of "surgery" (it is made explicit by the description of the doctor (medecine) holding a scalpel ("coupure" ) ); or by "assimilation" which can either be based on the similarity of "signifiés" as in the assimilation of the taxemes of "section", "coupure" and "sub-division militaire" where a polysemic relationship is exploited, or on a paronymic relationship of "signifiants" as in the assimilation of "bataillon" and "section" by means of "bas/taillons" and "sec/scions"; or by incorporation which is a result of the interaction between contiguity on the level of "signifié" and contiguity on the level of "signifiants", as in the association of the sky-scrapers and the taxo-arthreme of "cancer" by virtue of their colour "ocre" which is repeatedly linked with the taxemes of "coupure" ("jambes de /.../ couleur ocrée" (p.7)), "maladie" ("feuilles /.../ d'un vert tirant sur l'ocre /.../ et malades" (p.9)), and "medecine" ("Les chairs sont d'un rose ocré") which are all encompassed by the taxo-arthreme of "cancer":

Certes, la prise de contrôle classo-articulatoire est d'une fermeté inégale. Avec l'articulation, elle est directe (elle repose sur une immédiate affinité sémantique). Avec l'assimilation, elle est soit indirecte (elle recourt à des sens lointains du champ sémantique) soit décalée (elle passe par l'intermédiaire d'un jeu de mots). Avec l'incorporation, elle est reportée: elle provient d'un montage à partir de plusieurs occurrences. Cependant il arrive aussi qu'elle soit affirmée par des effets de "sur-contrôle": tel élément, d'est de plusieurs manières qu'il est maîtrisé par tel taxo-arthème dominant. Ainsi "section": dans l'état actuel de l'analyse, il appartient évidemment au taxème de la coupure et il s'y trouve lié une seconde fois en ce que son analyse phonético-sémantique "bas/taillons" fait apparaître le verbe "tailler." Mais de plus dans la mesure où il marque l'idée de multitude,

il relève du taxème de la prolifération. C'est donc par plusieurs itinéraires que le taxo-arthrème de cancer tend à en prendre le contrôle. 30

One can summarize the conflict between the movements of articulation ("l'articulatoire") and fragmentation ("le classificatoire"), according to Ricardou, in the following terms:

- A. Arthremes (narrative segments) are disrupted by taxemes (dominant "signifiés"), resulting in a break in the writing ("brisure actuelle") as when the segment containing "cuisse sectionnée" is interrupted by the segment containing "jambe coupée".
- B. Taxemes are assembled under the dominance of a taxo-arthreme, as in the example of the taxemes of "médecine" and "coupure" being contained within the taxo-arthreme of "chirurgie":

Des lors, il est clair, d'une part, que le classificatoire contredit au premier degré l'articulatoire en dissociant certains de ses articles au profit de l'association d'un taxème à un autre et d'autre part que l'articulatoire contredit en retour le classificatoire en intégrant au second degré les taxemes selon l'articulation d'un taxo-arthrème. 31

- C. Separate narrative sequences (arthremes) are assembled within a dominating, unifying arthreme ("sur-séquence"), as in the example of the integration of the sequence of the soldiers in the forest (description block III by our classification) and the sequence of the plane journey (sequence C by our classification) within the "sur-séquence" in which the soldiers in the forest appear as part of a magazine story being read by a man travelling by plane.
- D. Identical parts of different "sur-séquences" ("iso-arthremes") break off to re-assemble within an arthro-taxeme, as in the example of the arthro-taxeme of "franchissement difficile" which encompasses several separate "sur-séquences" such as the progress

of the man walking in the city, the progress of the "conquistadores" and guerrillas in the forest, and the sick man in the aeroplane:

Des lors, il est clair, d'une part, que l'articulatoire contredit au premier degré le classificatoire en dissociant certains de ses éléments au profit de l'agencement d'un arthème et d'autre part que le classificatoire contredit en retour l'articulatoire en assemblant au second degré les arthèmes selon la classification d'un arthro-taxème. 32

The conclusion which Ricardou omits to draw from this classification may be summarized by Figure 4, if we take the plus signs to indicate "presence in the writing" and the minus signs to indicate "absence from the writing, dependent on the reading".

Figure 4

|                           | A              | B | C | D |
|---------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|
| Association               | "brisure"<br>+ | - | + | - |
| Motivation of Association | (?)<br>-       | - | + | - |

Thus, in A the break in the text is actually in the writing but the motivation of the break is weak, or only partly in the writing, since although the words which actuate the metaphorical association (e.g. "jambes coupées") are clearly in the text, it is nevertheless up to the reader to make the metaphorical association himself: it is up to him to see the words as "métaphores structurelles". In B, the association and its motivation are "virtuelles", depending on the reader to place the dominant "signifiés" in a hierarchical relationship. In C, both the association and its motivation are "actuelles", affecting

the literal dimension of the text. In D, the association and its motivation are "virtuelles" relying on the interpretative inclinations of the reader. Figure 4 also shows us that it would be inaccurate to identify articulation with writing and fragmentation with reading or vice versa, since clearly, their relationship is mixed.

The conclusion which Ricardou does make is the same as the one he made in "'Claude Simon', textuellement": the fragments of Les Corps conducteurs are ultimately assimilated within a unifying "sur-sequence" (voyage to the Americas) which is not seriously undermined by any arthro-taxeme; they mostly reinforce it since the "signifiés" which weave the web of the dominance of the arthro-taxemes (e.g. ability or inability to arrive at a destination) are linked with the "sur-séquence":

Si la dislocation classificatoire est intense dans Les Corps conducteurs, elle reste cependant dominée par l'arborisation dominante: c'est même cette domination qui définit, si contestée soit-elle, l'appartenance au domaine dimensionnel. 33

We can now follow more clearly the thinking which has led Ricardou to this conclusion, stated so emphatically on two occasions. The reason why the "dislocation classificatoire" can be ultimately recuperated within a unificatory whole is that the disjunctive nature of the novel is produced by taxemes which are by necessity weak, in terms of the conflict between articulation and fragmentation, since they depend too much on the reader. This is why, in Ricardou's eyes, Triptyque is more fundamentally dislocated than Les Corps conducteurs: the former does not rely on taxemes as agents of disjunction but on the narrative itself and the contradictions therein. One cannot dispute this argument: the classificatory or taxematic

activity of Les Corps conducteurs is ultimately recuperable. But why restrict oneself to a "taxematic analysis" of Les Corps conducteurs? Ricardou's argument is misplaced. As part I of this thesis has shown, a "taxematic analysis" of La Route des Flamands, Le Balcon and Histoire concentrating on the tension between the articulatory and classificatory tendencies of the novel's motifs, is undoubtedly indispensable in any attempt to measure the extent of the novels' modernity. But just as in La Bataille de Pharsale where it is the intertextual fragments and not the motifs which are the prime agents of dislocation, is there not some other force of dislocation in Les Corps conducteurs? The following section will now propose that description blocks form such a force. We may now resume the analysis of this textual phenomenon which was interrupted by the discussion of Ricardou's work.

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### 3. Descriptive fusion and confusion.

One must point out in defense of Ricardou's analysis, that a taxeme is not a synonym for a motif. It would be more accurate to call it a common denominator. A taxeme is the name or title of a dominant "signifié", or a "signifié" which encompasses at least two different elements in a text. However, this titular quality of the "domaine classificatoire" provides the means by which a reductive reading of the novel is possible. If the reader can name the motivation of each group of associations in the novel then he stands a good chance of being able to fit them together within a narrative framework. For Ricardou, the syntactic level of Les Corps conducteurs

is dominated by the semantic level. But if we turn to our discussion of description blocks we will note that the overwhelming uncertainty on the reader's part in naming each individual block is one of the main distinctive features of these phenomena. This uncertainty is sometimes due to a plurality of contradictory possibilities and sometimes due to total absence of frame. The synecdochic activity of the description blocks only stresses this absence further. The instances of a description block do not refer to one another metonymically, in other words there is no contiguous relationship between them. Instead each instance acts as an index to its whole. Consequently when part of a description block is joined to another block or a narrative segment and the two elements remain logically incompatible, as in instances of descriptive confusion, it is the whole of the description block which is evoked in the clash. This "indexical function" of the description block is operated by the two varieties of referents which we may call "visual" and "scriptural". It is the former which abound in the "pseudo-sequences": blocks I and III.

The central referent of description block I is, as shown in Figure 3, the cartoon picture of a surgeon and a group of interns on the point of or just after operating on a smiling nude woman. However, the first instance of the description appears at the start of the novel preceded only by the opening instance of sequence A; and the framing of the description as a picture (in other words the denial of the segment's status as narrative sequence) does not come until the following page. Thus there is a short space of time when the reader is misled into believing that it is a separate narrative sequence. The framing of the block, however, is accompanied by the emergence of a new narrative

sequence: sequence B. It is the special relationship between description block I and sequence B which we shall now briefly consider. The opening passage is segmented in the following way: sequence A - block I (unframed) - sequence A - sequence B - sequence A - block II - sequence A or B ("zone amphibologique")/block II/sequence B/ block I (framed). The "rupture" between the first and second segments is, as Ricardou says, produced by the structural metaphor linking "cuisse sectionnée" and "jambe coupée". The break is signalled by the comparison ("coupure" in Ricardou's terminology) "faisant penser à quelque appareil". The "rupture" between the second and third segments is produced by repetition: the nipples of the girl on the operating table are "d'un rose vif" and "dressés" which evokes, elliptically, the description of the dog in the first segment who is "dressé joyeusement sur ses pattes de derrière, aboyant, sortant une langue rose". The "rupture" between the third and fourth segments is produced by the metonymic association between "jambe" and "pantalon". The short sentence which comprises the fourth segment is the first instance of sequence B: "Le docteur lui dit de baisser son pantalon" (p.8). There is clearly an influence which can be detected from the preceding instances of description block I. The doctor and the surgeon are obviously related through their professions, and, as Jean-Claude Raillon has pointed out,<sup>34</sup> there is a structural paronomasia linking the passages: "Bébé Cadum" and "baisser" are linked by the letters B and C which are in capitals in the former and form the phonetic component of the latter. From the point of view of the narrative, it is the appearance of "lui" which is significant, since there is no-one yet to whom it can refer. The sentence thus stands as an enigma. The "rupture" between the fifth and

sixth segments is signalled by the comparison "comme des orgues". The shift hinges on a correspondence in the descriptive language of the two segments: "orgue" creates a link with the sixth segment (block II) firstly by paronomastic association with "organe", and secondly by metaphorical association with "guitare", (Ricardou would say that the two elements are classified by the taxeme of "musical instrument"); the final sentence of the fifth segment, after repeating "côté" and "côte", culminates with "paroi molle" which, with its counterpart "paroi abdominale", forms the pivot around which the shift is operated. The "rupture" between the sixth and seventh segments relies on a continuation of the dominance of the taxeme "musical instrument" with which "accordéon" is metaphorically associated. There is also a correspondence, formed by the taxeme of "sensory perception", between "Sur le petit dôme formé par la poche verte le dessinateur a posé un reflet jaune pour obtenir un effet de *brillant* " and "Le docteur lui demande si cela ressemble à un pincement, une pression ou une brûlure". Segment 7 may be termed, to borrow from Ricardou, a "zone amphibologique".<sup>35</sup> In other words it may either be part of sequence A or part of sequence B. The unsuspecting reader first identifies it with sequence A, since a few lines beforehand described the man by the shop windows pressing his fingers into his side, but on reaching, a few lines later, the description of the man in sequence B being prodded by the doctor, the reader is entitled to identify segment 7 as an instance of sequence B. The most immediate reaction to segment 7 is the realization that it is an instance of descriptive confusion:

là où appuient ses doigts se trouve une masse  
aux contours mous, d'un rouge brique, comme  
un sac. A peu près en son milieu il y a une



poche vert clair, collée à la paroi [7] (p.9)

There is clearly a semantic clash here between what is either sequence A or sequence B and description block II: the man's stomach is identified, through the description, as part of an anatomical drawing. The referent of the description is thus transformed by the writing. The encounter of the two descriptions certainly disrupts the logic of the narrative, but it also serves as an agent of continuity since it produces the shift from segment 7 to segment 8 (one can assume that the "planche anatomique" is in the doctor's room). Thus "semantic incompatibility" makes way for "syntactic compatibility". Moreover, description block II plays a vital role in the framing of description block I within sequence B. The similarities between the two descriptions are obvious: firstly, the similarity is based on the form of their referents (both are pictures), and secondly on their content ("operation" and "anatomy" are clearly linked by "surgery"). The relationship is, however, more productive than mere resemblance. Block I is echoed in block II through the structural metaphor of "poche". The "poche ventrale" of the interns' aprons is echoed in the "poche vert olive" in the anatomical drawing. This detail of repetition is doubly significant: the interns' pockets contain surgical instruments (forceps, scissors), and in segments 6 and 7 musical instruments are metaphorically and paronomastically related with the anatomy ("orgue"/"organe", and the opening left by the absence of the "paroi abdominale" takes the shape of a "caisse d'une guitare"). As Ricardou would say, the taxemes of "musical instruments" and "surgical instruments" are related by the taxo-arthreme of "surgery". Block II thus paves the way for the metonymic articulation between block I and sequence B. The relationship

of these two is based on a pattern of exchange: block I first appears in the guise of a narrative sequence, its identity as a description block is not yet established, and sequence B's first appearance is, as we have seen, enigmatic. The fictional (metonymic) articulation between the two results in the solution of sequence B's enigma and the subjugation of block I to sequence B. Yet this dominance is not to be taken at face value: it is often inverted. The influence throughout the novel of block I on sequence B is easily discerned: it is, one could say, "dramatized" or reflected in the narrative. The next instance of sequence B is an instance of descriptive confusion with block II:

De la cavité à l'ouverture en forme de guitare le docteur retire l'un après l'autre les organes (ou lorsque ceux-ci sont trop gros, des morceaux d'organes) colorés. Ceux-ci sont faits d'une matière légère, comme du carton bouilli ou du celluloid. Ils s'emboîtent les uns dans les autres par un ingénieux système d'engrains qui permet de les détacher - ou de les replacer - sur une simple traction ou pression. Le docteur les range avec soin sur une tablette au plateau recouvert d'une serviette blanche disposée à côté de la table d'examen. (p.74)

The implicit presence of description block I within this passage can be inferred from the fact that the doctor is behaving, albeit in an unusual or "fantastic" fashion, as a surgeon, as well as from the fact that the anatomical parts which he is removing are made of "une matière légère, comme du carton bouilli ou du celluloid" which is an echo of the plastic legs at the start of the novel "faisant penser à quelque appareil de prothèse légère " and, by extension, to the "jambe coupée" held by the intern in the cartoon. Finally, the reader is being urged by the writing to note that "carton" is an "amphibologie" which can also mean "cartoon".

The influence spreads over the succeeding instances of sequence B in the form of the cancerous growth which invades the doctor's premises. This strange element of the fantastic has its origin in the description of a clock in the doctor's waiting-room :

Accoudée au cadran, une marquise à la robe de métal, à l'étroit corset, penche gracieusement la tête, un vague sourire aux lèvres, vers un jeune homme à tricorne assis à ses pieds et qui gratte une mandoline. Quoique les aiguilles soient immobilisées, il semble que l'on puisse entendre comme un fracas silencieux, comme l'avalanche d'un glacier invisible : quelque chose de grisâtre, immatériel et formidablement lourd qui avancerait sans répit, une avalanche au ralenti, rabotant le plancher, les murs, en marche depuis des milliards d'année, patiente et insidieuse. (p.88)

The "comparant" of the metaphor "the avalanche of time" takes on a "reality" and an independence of its own as the sequence develops. It is noticeable that the next few instances of sequence B (pp. 90, 91, 92, 95, 100-103, 106, 111, 127) in which there is no explicit mention of the cartoon, each contains a reference to the "masse grisâtre" of the cancer which, by linking up with the idea of "surgical operation" as well as by being a continuation of the idea of "growth" as expressed by the foetus in the cartoon, is a sign of the presence of block I. The influence here is "dramatized" by what is, as Ricardou rightly notes,<sup>36</sup> an unusual phenomenon in Simon's work, that of the "fantastic". Although block I has been framed within sequence B, the former continues to have a dominating influence on the latter. This "inter-frame" activity, or conflict of frames, is reflected in the description of the painting of a boxer hanging in the doctor's waiting-room :

Le visage du boxeur n'est qu'une tache ensanglantée

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et informe où sur un fond rouge sombre le peintre a posé quelques accents vermillon. La tête pendant vers le sol, muet, enfermé dans sa cloche de silence contre laquelle viennent battre les applaudissements et les huées du public invisible dans l'ombre qui entoure le ring, il semble concentrer toutes ses forces et sa volonté dans la poussée de ses bras pour se dégager de la chose grisâtre où il est maintenant enfoncé presque jusqu'aux coudes. (p. 106)

The reference to movement and sound clearly marks a transgression in the description of the painting <sup>37</sup>: the picture "literally" comes to life, it is no longer a representation. But more important is the contact between the boxer and the "chose grisâtre" ( in other words, the cancerous growth). The stress on the physical contact between the "masse grisâtre" and the paintings in the room ( an earlier instance described the growth touching the frame of a painting of a bouquet of anemones (pp.95 and 103)) could be interpreted by the reader as a reminder of the absent cartoon which is the generative origin of the cancerous growth. More generally, the emphasis can be seen to earmark the fundamental semantic incompatibility in the relationship between sequence B and block I. Unlike the articulation between two narrative sequences, such as we shall soon see between sequences A and B, and which can result in a harmonious fusion of one sequence within another, no union is possible between a sequence and a description block. Their typological difference constructs an insurmountable barrier. For the two fictional units to merge a structural change needs to be made in one of them, or, as Goffman would say, there would have to be a "break of frame". In other words, what separates sequences from blocks is not syntactic "brisure" but semantic "brisure".

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The "fantastic" element in the instances of sequence B coinciding with an absence of any mention of the cartoon is, on the other hand, completely cancelled out when the cartoon is mentioned at a later instance :

Rhabillé maintenant il est assis dans le fauteuil qui fait face au bureau du docteur. Tandis que le pouce et l'index de sa main droite tâtonnent au bas de son bras gauche pour reboutonner sa manchette, il guette avec anxiété le visage du medecin penché sur l'ordonnance qu'il est en train de rédiger. Derrière, accrochée sur le mur, il peut voir la joyeuse cohorte des carabins facétieux vêtus de blouses maculées de sang et qui se pressent autour de la jeune fille nue à tête de Bébé Cadum allongée sur la table d'opération. (p.162)

The narrative has returned to its initial state of "normality" : the doctor is not behaving as a surgeon, and there is no mention of the "masse grisâtre" ; instead, the framing of block I as a cartoon hanging on the wall is reiterated. However, if articulation between a narrative sequence and a description block is not an entirely smooth operation, articulation between two sequences poses no problem. The final appearance of the "matière grisâtre" produces a fusion or "fictional articulation" between sequences A and B. The latter is revealed as chronologically preceding the former:

Le trottoir sur lequel il avance est recouvert d'une épaisse couche de cette matière grisâtre (dont la consistance, quoique tiède, rappelle celle de la neige) accumulée peu à peu dans le salon d'attente du docteur. Montant jusqu'au genou, elle rend la progression difficile et chaque enjambée nécessite un effort qui le déséquilibre plus ou moins, comme quelqu'un englué dans un marécage ou avec les chevilles entravées. (p.205)

Thus description block I ( in the shape of the "matière grisâtre") acts as an agent of articulation or fusion between sequences A and B.

This fusion, although not explicitly stated until the end of the novel, comes as no surprise to the reader. The close relationship between the two sequences has been implicitly indicated by the writing. The repetitive *M&K* sound can be traced throughout the novel, especially in instances of sequences A and B : "maculées", block I (p.162); "MACALLYN", sequence A (p.162); "Meccano", sequence A (p.155); "macula", sequence A (p.154); "maquette", sequence A (p.140); and the doctor's "manchettes immaculées", sequence B (p.18)<sup>38</sup>.

The most significant instance of this repetition occurs in sequence B with the moment of the generative origin of the "masse grisâtre" element : the description, already quoted, of the bronze clock standing on the doctor's mantelpiece:

L'épaisse moquette, les guéridons, la commode de marqueterie, les fauteuils de style, composait le décor anonyme [...]. Accoudée au cadran une marquise à la robe de métal, à l'étroit corset, penche gracieusement la tête, un vague sourire aux lèvres, vers un jeune homme à tricorne assis à ses pieds et qui gratte une mandoline. (p.88)

The association between sequences A and B is shown here firstly by the reference to "mandoline" which falls under the dominance of the taxeme of "musical instruments" which, as we saw earlier, is linked with sequence A. The "moquette" here links up with the "moquette rouge" of the hotel in sequence A (p.28). Most significant of all, however, is the amphibological link between the figure of the "marquise à la robe de métal" on the clock and the "marquise faite de verre et de métal" which is the glass porch of the hotel in sequence A (p.8). Conversely, the insistence on the "verre" and "métal" qualities of the hotel "marquise" links up with the cartoon which, as Ricardou has pointed out, is a "dessin sous verre" and contains a representation



of the interns' metallic instruments.

Consequently, bearing in mind all these details of implicit association, when the fusion between sequences A and B is explicitly made at the end of the novel, it comes as no surprise to note the reference to the hotel porch:

Parmi la profusion désordonnée des enseignes qui, de nouveau, vues ainsi en enfilade, se chevauchent et se superposent, son oeil cherche tout de suite la marquise de son hôtel, le parallélépipède plat en verre dépoli et métal chromé qui déborde au-dessus du trottoir et dont ne le sépare plus maintenant qu'une courte distance. (p.204-5)

Thus although description block I does not itself "fuse" with sequence B in any straightforward way, it acts as an agent of fusion by bringing two initially separate narrative sequences together. On the one hand it is disjunctive in that it has a distorting effect on sequence B, and, on the other hand, it is unificatory in that it produces the articulation of sequences A and B. As we shall now see, the other three blocks differ from block I in that they are entirely disjunctive.

The "pseudo-sequential" tendencies of block III are more obvious than those of block I but they are also more thwarted.<sup>39</sup> Unlike block I, whose "pseudo-sequential" aspect is due to the delay in the "framing" of the cartoon description, block III is framed as a visual reproduction from the very start:

Un personnage au crâne chauve, à la longue barbe, le buste revêtu d'une cuirasse qui fait place, à partir de la taille, à une courte jupe, se tient debout sur une plage [...]  
Les feuillages, les indigènes agenouillés, sont représentés dans un camaïeu vert, ainsi que le guerrier qui brandit le crucifix. (p.14)

The "pseudo-sequential" aspect lies in the fact that, at later instances,

this pictorial description shows signs of "coming to life": of, that is, becoming a narrative sequence. In the second instance, for example, the description focusses on the movement of the soldiers and the natives:

Ainsi le général y fait embarquer tout ce qu'il y a de gens de guerre, laissant à l'ancre les deux autres vaisseaux avec une partie des matelots. Comme les soldats commencent avec beaucoup de peine à surmonter la force du courant d'eau ils aperçoivent un nombre considérable de canots pleins d'Indiens armés outre ceux que l'on voit à terre en diverses troupes, et qui par leur mouvement semblent dénoncer la guerre et vouloir défendre l'entrée de la rivière par des cris et par ces postures que la crainte fait faire à ceux qui souhaiteraient éloigner le péril à force de menaces [41]. Sautant hors des embarcations des soldats aux lourdes armures courent dans l'eau qui rejailit en éclaboussures. (p.40)

This development is entirely contradicted when, a few lines later, the description is re-framed as a print on a postage stamp by the reference to the letters printed in the sky indicating the value of the stamp:

Le chiffre 35 suivi du mot CENTAVOS est gravé en taille-douce dans le ciel teinté sans doute par la lueur du couchant [41] (p.41)

One could claim that there is no real contradiction here, that the references to movement do not have to be taken literally. The present tense could be seen to be being used in its "eternal aspect": 40 that is, conveying a general, "historical" timelessness which matches the general commentary on the invasion of the Americas by the Europeans at the start of the passage. The use of the present tense might therefore be said to be "a-temporal" or "descriptive" in the description of the postage stamp. No such interpretation, however, is

possible later on in the novel where the references to movement and time in instances of block III become more direct and more insistent. This element of spatio-temporal progression which is in total contradiction with the original framing of the description as a postage stamp, is the means by which the description block strives to transform itself into a narrative sequence:

Quoique depuis tout à l'heure elle ait certainement progressé, rien apparemment n'a changé dans le décor qui entoure de toutes parts la colonne d'hommes en armes [ ] (p.108)

The stress on the element of movement in the description is further underlined by the reference to the flight of the butterfly, "une tache d'un jaune vif, voletant d'une façon incohérente, s'élevant, s'abaissant, glissant sur le côté, s'élevant de nouveau, comme un léger morceau de papier ballotté par les courants d'un air mou". But it is also this very butterfly which undoes the transformation, reminding us that what we are reading is not a narrative sequence but an instance of a description block:

A l'approche du chef de la colonne le papillon prend de nouveau son essor, volette un moment, indécis, comme un ivre, puis disparaît sur la droite hors du rectangle de la photographie. (p.109)

The reference to the "frame break" in this instance (the butterfly flying out of the photo) is not unlike the example we looked at earlier with regard to sequence B where the boxer in the painting was pushing the "matière grisâtre" which invaded the painting as well as the room in which it was hanging. The difference is in the direction of the movement. Whereas in the earlier example an external element (the cancerous growth) was breaking into the painting, in this instance an internal element (the butterfly) is breaking out of the photograph.

The similarity between the two examples goes further. The butterfly, as we shall see later, is an element of description block IV, just as the "matière grise" in the earlier example was an element of description block I. The reader is therefore confronted with another instance of descriptive confusion, this time between description blocks III and IV. The special ability of elements of description blocks to "spill over" into a different unit of fiction (whether a narrative sequence or another description block) acts, paradoxically, as a reminder of the description blocks' inability to be involved in an articulation. Nevertheless, the main characteristic of a description block is that its elements are continually "breaking" frame" and it is this activity, so frequent in Les Corps conducteurs, which should have led Ricardou to classify this novel as well as Triptyque as a "discoherent" text.

The extent to which block III is fragmented can be gauged by glancing at Figure 4. In contrast to block I where the central referent is unambiguously framed as a cartoon, the framing of the central referent of block III (the description of the "conquistadores" in Indian territory) remains ambiguous. This ambiguity is produced on two levels. Firstly, there is a contradiction in the framing of the description both as a postage stamp (pp.14,39-41,85) and as a photograph (pp.108-9,194-5). Secondly, the description is never framed within any of the narrative sequences, thus remaining independent of the "arborescence" of the novel's macro-structure. The reader is thus unable to "situate" the description. Its disruptive influence lies in the fact that one can recognize the block's secondary referents or "variants" in several different framings: the description

of the newspaper advertisement of the film "El Indomable" in sequence D (pp.148,157); the magazine photo in sequence C (pp.21-4: the similarity with the central ~~referent~~ is very marked here but there are certain notable differences such as the "courte barbe rousse" of the military leader in the magazine photo and the "longue barbe" of the military leader in the central referent); the story narrated in the first person by Orlando in the same magazine in sequence C (pp.137,165); the description of the soldiers at the aeroport in sequence C (p.187); the description of the toy soldiers in the shop window in sequence A:

des colonnes de petits soldats en tenue de  
camouflage ~~progressaient~~; dans un jungle miniature [7] (p.155)

' To summarize, certain elements of description, whether on the level of "signifiant" (vocabulary, style) or on the level of "signifié" (referents, motifs) reappear outside the base of their original block either in a narrative sequence or in a different block. When this shift occurs primarily on the level of "signifié" the result is either an instance of repetition or, if developed more extensively, an instance of the fantastic (as in the example of the influence of block I on sequence B). <sup>41</sup> It is in these cases that visual descriptions proliferate, as the numerous examples of block III demonstrate. Following Ricardou's terminology, we may define the moments of repetition as "virtuels" since it is up to the reader to recognize these different instances as variants of the same description block. The disruption is less extreme than the instances of the fantastic which involve the writing in so far as the narrative is transformed and taken on an "abnormal" or "unreal" appearance. It is, however, in instances of descriptive confusion that the disruption is greatest since it is produced

on the level of the writing. It is to this phenomenon that we shall now turn our attention.

According to the definition given near the start of this chapter, "fusion" may be defined as an "intra-sequential" or internal connection. Thus the articulation which we traced between sequences A and B can be called an example of fusion since the narrative barrier which initially separated the sequences is taken down and they are both reunited within the same sequence: "fusion", therefore, or metonymic articulation, in Ricarou's terms, is unificatory. We have by now, hopefully, proved that the example which Ricardou selects (articulation between block I and sequence B) is not entirely satisfactory since the association is "troubled" by the element of the fantastic. On the other hand, the fusion of sequences A and B is less disruptive to the logic of the narrative. But "descriptive confusion" is the primary source of the disjunctive nature of Les Corps conducteurs.

Some of the examples of descriptive confusion that we have already looked at (between block I and sequence B (p.106), and between blocks III and IV (p.109)) by drawing our attention to pictures, and more *importantly* to picture frames, are symbolically describing the ordered world of narrative logic and perception which they subsequently transgress: the butterfly and the "masse grisâtre" both "break frame". This referential focus is partnered, in other instances of descriptive confusion, by another type of focus, involving this time the writing as "signifiant". There are several "styles" in Les Corps Conducteurs: the political style of the conference speeches in sequence D; the racy first person narrative journalesque style of the magazine story in sequence C;<sup>42</sup> the fact-studded, encyclopaedic style of the information

on the anatomy in block II and on "fauna and flora" in block IV.

"Style emphatique" can be described as a caricature of language since, like a cartoon, its exaggerated quality draws attention to its status as symbol, in other words to "the expressive function" of frame. <sup>43</sup>

If blocks I and III are notable for the profusion of pictorial descriptions contained therein (photos, prints, drawings, etc.), blocks II and IV could be said to be more "scriptural" in nature. We have already said that blocks I and III are "pseudo-sequential" and that the other two blocks act as "appendices" to them. These two characteristics of blocks II and IV (their style and their function as "appendices") should be considered in the same light.

Our analysis of description block I showed us the close relationship between it and block II. In fact the central referent of block II, the anatomical drawing, is a visual description and is implicitly framed, like the cartoon in block I (except that with the latter the framing is explicit) within sequence B. The reader can assume, although he is never told, that the anatomical diagram is hanging in the doctor's waiting-room. Yet the description is not without its ambiguities. Firstly, a sense of dispersion is created by the variants which are framed in different sequences. The description of the anatomical drawing in block II:

A partir du diaphragme et jusqu'au ras du  
pubis la paroi abdominale a été découpée,  
comme un couvercle que l'on aurait retiré.  
L'ouverture ménagée affecte à peu près la  
forme de la caisse d'une guitare (p.9),

is echoed in the description of the optician's "plaque anatomique" in sequence A:

Au-dessous et à la même échelle figure une

coupe schématique du même oeil montrant la cornée bombée, la chambre antérieure, la pupille, l'iris, le corps vitré, la rétine et le nerf optique. La cornée et la sclérotique qui entoure le globe sont colorées de bleu lavande, la chambre antérieure derrière la partie bombée de la cornée est couleur chair, l'iris rouge orangé, le cristallin est strié de fines lignes bleues, comme un oignon aplati coupé en deux, la masse du corps vitré est d'un gris bleuté, la rétine et le nerf optique sont vert nil. (p.154),

and is also echoed in the description of the anatomical drawing of a brain which the traveller gazes at on the aeroplane in sequence C:

En haut d'une colonne se trouve un encadré dans la partie supérieure duquel on voit une tache grise affectant vaguement la forme d'un rognon ou d'un haricot et dont le sommet convexe est occupé de petits créneaux. Sur la droite est imprimé le mot CERVEAU. Une flèche, dirigée vers le bas, part d'une pastille rouge, au centre de la masse, et aboutit à un cercle où est représentée une coupe agrandie de l'hypophyse. De là une seconde flèche décrivant une courbe conduit le regard à une sorte de cornue qui occupe le bas du tableau, son bec dirigé vers la droite. Suivant le tracé de la flèche courbe on peut lire: ACTION DES GONADOTROPHINES. Dans la partie ventrale de la cornue se trouve un petit ovale, légèrement oblique, d'où s'échappe un mince serpent qui après avoir suivi un trajet méandrique redescend finalement selon l'axe centrale du bec de la cornue. (pp.164-5)

Apart from the taxemes of "coupure" and "anatomie" which link the three passages together, one can also note that certain "signifiants" in the latter two passages echo one another: "cornée"/"cornue", "oignon"/"rognon", "haricot".

There is, however, another way in which block II "spills over" onto different areas of the text. A striking feature of all three passages quoted above is that they contain an unusual amount of technical names ("diaphragme", "cornée", "cristallin", "pubis", "sclérotique",



"hypophyse", "GONADOTROPHINES"). The phenomenon may not seem strange in those particular passages since it is conceivable that the words are being read from the anatomical drawing in the magazine in the third passage, and, less conceivably, the words are being read from the "planche anatomique" in the first and second passages. The phenomenon is less amenable to the logic of the narrative at other moments of the text, as in the following example:

Bien après que le docteur a retiré ses mains la sensation de pression persiste, ou plutôt d'un corps étranger, énorme, resté fiché comme un coin. Les états inflammatoires aigus du foie, ou hépatites, relèvent de causes infectieuses (virus, spirochètes) ou chimiques (phosphore, alcool, etc.). Certaines inflammations localisées (amibes) peuvent aboutir à l'abcès du foie. (p.47)

Although the second two sentences follow on from the reference to the medical examination in the first sentence, the passage is clearly divided into two separate "isotopies".<sup>44</sup> The first part of the passage is an instance of sequence B and the second part is an instance of block II. The one links up in a chain of events (the visit to the doctor) and the other acts as an index evoking the "motif conducteur" (anatomy) of its "generative origin" (block II). What distinguishes one isotopy from the other is the difference in style. There is a change in discourse. The latter sentences seem to be part of a medical text. The sentences, though belonging to description block II, are totally unframed. There is no answer to questions like "Who is reading the medical text? Is it part of a book, an encyclopaedia, or a magazine? Where is it being read and when?" The most important point to note, however, is that the juxtaposition of the two fictional units (sequence B and block II) creates a confusion in the reading.

Instances of descriptive confusion are even more intense when, instead of a juxtaposition of isotopies (as in the above example), two incompatible units of fiction are mixed together syntactically. The barriers of the sentence are broken down. The following example is taken from the start of a long instance of descriptive confusion between sequence E and block II.

Sur le lit défait les deux corps nus étendus ont maintenant retrouvé les couleurs de la chair dans la lumière: ocrée, rosée ou laiteuse selon les parties habituellement au soleil et à l'air. Comme ces statues de saints en bois peint que l'on promène dans les processions, vacillantes sur les épaules des porteurs, et où une petite fenêtre vitrée, ménagée sur la poitrine, un membre, permet de voir à l'intérieur quelque fragment d'os, la peau, sur le devant des torsos, a été découpée et retirée à partir des seins - des pectoraux - jusqu'à un peu au-dessus du pubis. Sur l'ouverture en forme de guitare, légèrement étranglée en son milieu à hauteur de la taille, a été posé un couvercle de plexiglas moulé, reproduisant les reliefs des corps, le sillon entre les abdominaux chez l'homme, le renflement bombé du ventre de la femme au-dessous du pli du nombril. A travers la paroi transparente on peut voir les organes internes [.] (pp.67-8)<sup>45</sup>

Apart from the reference to the internal organs, several elements are repeated from other instances of block II such as "Sur l'ouverture en forme de guitare légèrement étranglée en son milieu à hauteur de la taille" and "tuyaux qui se divisent en branches" which are almost word for word repetitions of parts of the description of the anatomical drawing at the start of the novel.<sup>46</sup> The confusion of the passage thus hinges on the metaphorical elements in the description. This observation is supported by the fact that the transition from the "straightforward" description of the lovers lying together to a description which is confused with elements of the description of the

anatomical drawing in block II is brought about through a metaphorical comparison, or what Ricardou would call a "coupure": "Comme ces statues de saints [.] " Thus although the passage is full of references to visual perception ("fenêtre vitrée [...] qui permet de voir", "A travers la paroi transparente on peut voir [.] ") the articulation of the two fictional units (sequence E and block II) is "scriptural" and not visual. This apparent contradiction is repeated at other instances of descriptive confusion involving description block II:

Les haillons déchirés découvrent les peaux *brûlées*,  
d'une couleur terreuse, sous lesquelles saillie  
chaque tendon, chaque muscle et chacun des os du  
squelette comme ces écorchés des planches d'anatomie.  
De dos on peut ainsi voir: A ; le releveur propre.  
E : l'omoplate dépouillée de ses muscles, excepté  
l'Abaisseur propre. C : l'Abaisseur propre [.] 47 (pp.183-4)

In this case the metaphorical comparison which sparks off the descriptive confusion ("comme ces écorchés des planches d'anatomie") self-consciously refers to the agent of the confusion, description block II, which is here distorting an instance of description block III. Thus the visual aspect of the passage ("on peut ainsi voir") is implicitly offset by the scriptural nature of the passage. In both the above examples the subject of the perception, the person who is looking, is not only ambiguous but logically impossible. Thus the "irrecuperability" of the passage is ironically asserted. Moreover, one reason for the preference of scriptural confusion over visual confusion is that whereas the latter tends to unify two separate fictional units within a visual whole, the former underlines the disjunctive nature of the connection, proffering a continual reminder of the double-sidedness of the passage's composition.

Description block IV is the most fragmentary of all the description

blocks. The main reason for this is that its central referent is both unframed and ambiguous. Is it a photo in a magazine or encyclopaedia, being read possibly by the man travelling by plane in sequence C?

La page est divisée en trois colonnes verticales. L'accumulation des caractères serrés leur donne une teinte grisâtre. La photo en couleur du boa occupe le haut de la colonne de gauche. L'article Serpent commence à la page précédente [.] (pp.22-3)

Is it an ancient parchment on exhibition in a museum? (In which case to which narrative segment does the description belong?)

(Vélin du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle peint par de Vailly. Vol.80, no.54) (pp.215-7)

Or, finally, is it a map of the American continent seen through the window of a travel agency in sequence A?

Au-dessus de l'avion et occupant le milieu de la vitrine se trouve un panneau vertical, un peu plus haut que l'hôtesse de contre-plaqué, sur lequel se trouve la reproduction d'un portulan où est représenté le continent américain [...]. Toute indication cesse à peu de distance de la côte en même temps que s'estompe la bande verte qui la borde, laissant place à la teinte jaunâtre du parchemin sur lequel sont peints des bouquets de palmiers, d'arbres touffus, des perroquets rouges, des singes, des dragons ailés, des oiseaux bleus ou bruns, des marais [.] (pp.217-8)

This central description contains several "motifs conducteurs": snakes, birds, butterflies, stars are brought together on the one hand because they are in contiguous juxtaposition in the map, photo, or parchment and on the other hand because fragments of encyclopaedic information are given on all four subjects. Thus they are related in that they are framed within the same though unidentifiable visual referent, and also in that they are contained within the same scriptural frame. In so far as it assembles several textual elements, without it ever being clear

what the framework of the assemblage is, block IV serves as a "mise en abyme" of the compositional nature of all the description blocks. Its most significant component in this respect is the reference to the constellation of stars. This image is a constellation within a larger constellation, that of the whole description block.<sup>48</sup> The pointlessness of attempting to find a meaning in the constellation is comically suggested in an instance of descriptive confusion between block IV and sequence E:

Dans deux groupes d'étoiles rapprochées dessinant deux triangles de grandeur à peu près égale où l'on peut lire schématiquement un visage, certains peuples de l'Antiquité croyaient pouvoir situer les positions successives occupées par la tête de la femme lorsque dans un spasme elle la rejette en arrière, se cambrant, abandonnant le gland qu'elle pressait entre les lèvres, sa main toutefois toujours crispée sur la verge tendue. (pp.57-8)

The comic effect is based on a caricature of the interpretative activity involved in the "reading" of the Orion constellation:

Les différentes étoiles n'indiquent qu'approximativement la position des corps et des membres. La chevelure de Bérénice est dessinée par une vingtaine d'étoiles, de magnitude 4 à 6. (p.57)

Similar doubts in the process of attaching meanings to or "making sense of" empirical data are scattered in different parts of the novel, as, for instance, in the failure of the interpreter in sequence D to keep up with the chaotic proceedings at the conference (p.158), or in the interpretation of the dance of the cocks in block IV:

La signification de cette pantomime n'est pas claire. (p.216)


More generally, "constellation" mirrors the structure of description blocks: that is, a grouping of different textual elements along a

metonymic axis.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, it is the associations forming the patterns which are important and not the naming or interpretation of these patterns. In order to follow the patterns, the reader needs to note the hinge-points of the articulations, the moments of shift from one fictional unit to another. We have already seen that instances of descriptive confusion combine two separate and incompatible fictional isotopies. The combination, though often produced by harmonious associations of language, remains dissonant since no unification or integration is achieved on the level of the narrative. It is the style of the blocks involved in descriptive confusion which most draws the reader's attention to this dissonance, or clash of frames. The most extreme example of this can be found in the instances of descriptive confusion which are produced by block IV:

Seuls deux ou trois des hommes de la colonne relèvent la tête. Les Aras ont des moeurs sociables: ils forment des bandes comptant quelques dizaines d'individus. L'Ara militaire ou Ara macao est, avec le Cacatoès, le plus grand des perroquets. /.../ leur plumage est d'un beau rouge vif. Leurs ailes sont jaune et bleu. Quelle fête de couleur lorsque les Aras, ailes déployées, s'envoient dans les rayons de soleil! /.../ Les quelques soldats qui s'étaient laissés distraire laissent à nouveau leur tête et reprennent leur marche. (p.174)

This passage, triggered off by the description of the pigeons in sequence A is an instance of descriptive confusion between blocks IV and III. The description of the soldiers' march in the forest is interrupted by the encyclopaedic information on parrots. Despite certain correspondences between the two fictional units such as "Ara militaire" mirroring the taxeme of "militarism" in block III,<sup>50</sup> the incompatibility of the two isotopies is evident. It is the writing which stresses this incompatibility. The cliché, "emphatic" style of

"quelle fête de couleur lorsque les Aras, ailes déployées, s'envolent dans les rayons du soleil!" underlines the fact that there is a shift in discourse between the two passages. The speaker in both cases is not the same. The attempt at fusion between the two isotopies is thus irredeemably undermined. The reader is confronted with, in Ricardou's words, a case of pure "dis-articulation" or "discoherence". A more insidious instance of descriptive confusion produced by block IV can be found later in the text:

quelque part l'oiseau rieur, toujours le même  
semble-t-il, continue de loin en loin à faire  
entendre son cri. leur volonté toute entière  
rassemblée pour faire mouvoir leurs jambes,  
les marcheurs épuisés ne tressaillent même plus  
lorsque parfois un serpent ou quelque bête dédale  
sous leur pas, ne prêtent plus attention, sauf  
si leur taille en fait un gibier possible, aux  
animaux qui peuplent la forêt. Souvent parmi les  
taches éclatantes qui dansent devant leurs yeux  
envahis de pus ou troublés par le manque de  
sommeil, ils ne sont plus capables de distinguer  
entre les papillons géants et certains oiseaux.  
Les uns comme les autres ont des couleurs  
incrédibles, des dimensions incroyables [...]   
D'autres, à peine plus gros, ont un poitrail  
bleu ardoise, un ventre olive, des ailes couleur  
noisette, une longue queue blide d'un gris  
d'acier. Acrobates aériens, crochets, piqués,  
vol au point fixe sont leurs exploits de tous  
les instants [...] De même que le Cacatois huppé,  
ils semblent être le fruit de l'imagination  
aberrante d'un peintre. A leur vue, comme à  
celle des végétaux monstrueux ou des serpents  
géants, certains des marcheurs se croient dans  
leur épuisement, la proie d'allucinations et  
délirent à voix haute. (p.213)

The passage, an instance of block III describing the soldiers' march in the forest, is thoroughly pervaded with elements from block IV: the birds, snakes, butterflies and the taxeme of "gigantism" linking up with Orion ("papillons géants", "végétaux monstrueux ou des serpents géants"). Of course the stress on the element of sound (the "oiseau rieur" often denotes

a frame break in the forest march description) is itself a contradiction of the description's visual framing (whether as photo, print, or stamp engraving). The most fundamentally disjunctive aspect of this passage is, however, the presence of two separate discourses beneath the apparent surface homogeneity. Some of the sentences (especially the one beginning "Acrobates aériens ...") are clearly part of an encyclopaedic-type, natural history text on butterflies. In other words they belong to description block IV. The specialized naming and informative style of the sentence clash with the "narrative" of the soldiers' march. Other parts of the passage are less clearly identifiable in terms of deciding which description block they belong to. The phenomenon of the "zone amphibologique" is thereby created.

In short, we may define an instance of descriptive confusion as a clash of isotopies. Identification of each isotopy entails noting the synecdochic activity of the scattered instances of a description block *referring* to its "generative origin". Thus the sentence, "Acrobates aériens, crochets, piqués, vol au point fixe sont leurs exploits de tous les instants ", or the sentence about the "Ara militaire" in the earlier passage, despite appearing "within" the forest march description, are, in fact, out of context or rather they refer indexically to their "original context", that is to block IV. One cannot define this reference as a metonymic association since the concept of metonymy involves the activity of naming ( the word has its etymological roots in the Greek word "metonymia" which means change ("meta") of name("onoma"))<sup>51</sup> As has often been repeated in this chapter, the striking characteristic of description blocks is their resistance to nomenclature. What name, for example, can one attach to



description block IV? It contains a number of diverse elements which are linked in different ways: either visually framed in the same referent, like the map or photo which places the stars, snakes, birds, and butterflies in contiguous relation; or linguistically linking up through , for example, the word "serpent". The existence of a system of association is undeniable, but what is missing is its name, a dominating seme which refers simultaneously to all the component elements. One reason for this absence, as has already been stated, is that each component element does not refer to all the others. Thus the description of Poussin's painting "belongs to" block IV only in so far as it links up, through Orion, with the motif of "constellation" and not with any of the other components of the block.<sup>52</sup> This absence of naming serves as one of the most disruptive forces in the novel since it denies the reader any firm basis upon which he can build a hierarchical, interpretative reading. Thus the act of literary analysis ceases to be a matter of reduction, of expunging the central semantic structure of a text, and becomes a matter of charting a moving pattern. Paradoxically, it is often the exaggerated presence of unusual names (a characteristic of block IV) which spotlights these moments of shift, of movement. Thus the transformation in the following passage from block III to block IV is indicated by the three names of butterflies:

Tout autour des marcheurs et derrière eux les  
feuillages projettent des ombres opaques,  
privés de ces transparences bleutées ou citronnées  
comme on en voit par exemple dans les tableaux  
impressionnistes. Parfois seulement un reflet  
métallique sur de larges feuilles à la surface  
vernée luit durement dans la demi-obscurité  
sur laquelle se détachent, voletant d'une façon  
incohérente, les innombrables espèces de papillons  
/. . . / ailes bleu turquoise rayées en éventail

par des stries indigo , deux étroites bandes orange séparant les ailes antérieures des ailes postérieures (Hopféria Militaris); ailes rouges soutachées de noir portant à chacune de leurs extrémités antérieures un oeil à la paupière noire, à la cornée blanche, à l'iris pourpre tacheté de noir, cerné d'un côté par une dentelure de lapis-lazuli tandis que sur les deux ailes postérieures le même oeil est répété en plus petit avec cette fois une prunelle bleue piquetée de noir (Paon de jour); ailes en forme de voiles latines, triangulaires, jaunes marbrées de noir bordées à leur partie antérieure d'une bande bleue où courent ~~des~~ arceaux noirs (Machaon). (pp.149-150 )

The extraneous discourse here ( an encyclopaedic text on butterflies) is denoted by "Hopféria Militaris", "Paon de jour", and "Machaon". The excentricity of the names underlines their paronomastic quality (Paon and Machaon echo one another, and Machaon links up with the pervasive chain of words containing the syllable Mack , while the metaphorical "Militaris" links up with the "Ara Militaire"). Thus attention is drawn to the material quality of the names. On the other hand, the referential function of names in general is paradoxically undermined by this excentricity. The subversive play of irony becomes clearer when one remembers that despite the profusion of exotic and specialized, technical names, the "characters" themselves are not named nor are the "settings" clearly identified in the novel.

Apart from its role in producing descriptive confusion, the use of proper names is clearly very important in all descriptive writing.<sup>53</sup> It is in reply to the common criticism of the "nouveaux romanciers" as "chosistes" that Stephen Heath presents the following analysis of a passage taken from the Goncourt journal:

Here the writing is deliberately absent, the

purpose of the passage is confined entirely to notation of the real "out there". Its space is that of name and position or distance, and language is reduced to the zero degree of indication, literally a pointing: "Au fond, le comptoir", "Derrière le comptoir, porte et fenêtres". The verb as point of relation and human action has disappeared, and the verb être has been rendered redundant by the solid presence of the scene out there to which the names point: "Chez Milan, au coin de la rue de Beaujolais. Petite boutique." The scene of the writing is expelled as far as possible from the writing and the minimilization of syntax (organization) is the movement of this exteriorization. The writing is no more than a mirror: the organization of the passage is outside itself in the seen and its status is thus strictly taxonomic, it lists, it literally takes stock of the shop. Effectively, the writing here operates to the maximum a kind of repression of the "signifié", confounding meaning and thing in an extended process of ostensive definition. 54

The function of naming is thus associated with the taxonomic aspect of language: naming is a form of listing. It is as a reaction against this didactic use of language that the countless inventories in most "nouveaux romans" must be read. Within the context of modern fictional writing, enumeration has become obsolete:

On compte environ deux cents espèces à l'hectare: côte à côte des arbres aussi différents que l'hévéa, le palmier, le noyer, le manguier, le bananier, le calebassier [...] Tout de suite l'énumération se décourage car elle ne signifie plus rien [...] (p.131) 55

This obsolescence is due to the fact that naming is closely related, as Heath says, to the most primitive form of language, that of "object words" which have "ostensive definition". This naïve interpretation of language is founded on the erroneous belief that the relationship between word and object is direct:

An ostensive definition is one which defines an object by "pointing" to it. 56

However, linguistics has shown that the relationship is more complicated. The "semiotic triangle" defines the relationship between "word" and "world" as: symbol (or "signifiant") - concept (or "signifié") - referent (or object).<sup>57</sup> The descriptive world of Claude Simon's novels relies totally on this view of language. The reader is confronted with a moving pattern of "signifiants" and "signifiés". There are no objects in Les Corps conducteurs, only "signifiés". The view of art as imitation, or "mirror of the world" is obscured by the screen of "signifiés" which, firstly, obey the laws of language as system and not the world of experience to which they refer, and secondly (since it is impossible to separate "signifié" from "signifiant") are woven into a pattern of signification by the materiality of the "signifiants". The novel self-consciously offers an image of this relationship between language and reality in an instance of sequence 1:

Il avance à la fois assez lentement pour que quelques unes de cette série d'images [...] aient le temps de s'inscrire avec précision sur sa rétine, et suffisamment vite [...] pour qu'elles ne fassent qu'un amas [...] dans un vague brouillard de formes non identifiées - ou peut-être reconnues mais oubliées en même temps que perçues, les concepts (passage, roulière, verdure) s'interposant entre le regard et les objets, substituant à ceux-ci une série d'images préfabriquées et sans présence. (p.76)

It would be absurd to suggest that the language of Simon's text is totally opaque and does not refer to anything outside itself. Such an interpretation would involve an utter denial of the referential aspect of language. All words, by definition, in the "semiotic triangle" refer to the world of objects. It is the complexities of this reference which undermine the idea of the division between "word"

and "world". A reading of Les Corps conducteurs does not involve an accession to any world outside the novel, but an endless exploration and production of textual signification.<sup>58</sup> In an attempt at such an exploration, the present chapter has concentrated on the compositional nature of Les Corps conducteurs and, in particular, on the phenomenon of the description block.

Since discussion has centred round the topic of naming in descriptive writing, we should perhaps end with a brief consideration of the title of Simon's novel. Claude Simon has said that the original title for this novel was "Propriétés de quelques figures, géométriques ou non".<sup>59</sup> Such a title, though limiting, would certainly have indicated the special treatment of space in the novel. However, the choice of "Les Corps conducteurs" as the title is more satisfactory since it encompasses the whole novel by pinpointing its most basic feature: articulation. Once again, Claude Simon's writing proves to have close affinities with that of Marcel Proust:

(Et même une syllabe commune à deux noms différents  
suffisait à ma mémoire - comme à un électricien  
qui se contente du moindre corps bon conducteur -  
pour rétablir le contact entre Albertine et mon  
coeur.)<sup>60</sup>

Set against these lines from Proust, the description of the butterfly in block III ("comme un léger morceau de papier ballotté par les courants d'un air mou"(p.108)) takes on the power of a self-reflexive image of the text traversed by the cross-currents of the movement of writing.

PART IV

SELF-REFLEXIVITY

## Chapter One

### Self-reflexivity and "Mise en Abyme".

In his penetrating study entitled Le Récit spéculaire, Lucien Dällenbach outlines five different categories of "mises en abyme". "Mises en abyme fictionnelles" (or "mises en abyme de l'énoncé") reflect the referential aspect of the narrative. Often in the form of a story within a story, this form of self-reflexivity can focus on certain primary features of the macro-text and highlight the thematic signification of these features. Thus the in-set story of "Cupid and Psyche" in Apuleius's The Golden Ass, according to Dällenbach, acts as a "mise en abyme" in that it reflects the outer narrative relating the experiences of Lucius, and enhances the reader's interpretation of it:

Sitôt contaminés par l'expérience parallèle de Psyché, les avatars de Lucius ne peuvent que se lire - se lire en ce qui concerne les livres précédant la mise en abyme - comme autant d'épreuves d'un être promis, après un temps d'aliénation et d'errances, au salut dispensé par la divinité maîtresse des métamorphoses. <sup>1</sup>

While "mises en abyme fictionnelles" may be said to reflect the result of an act of production, "mises en abyme énonciatives" (or "mises en abyme de l'énonciation") may be described as reflecting the agent and process of this production. A "mise en abyme énonciative" is one which reflects the writer or the reader. An example of the former case, according to Dällenbach, is the "joueur du puzzle" who appears at the end of Triptyque:

Le joueur du puzzle représente l'auteur sans méprise possible puisque le jeu de patience qui l'occupe, qualifié "d'assemblage" (p.221), matérialise, à partir du néant, le village décrit dans les premières pages du livre. <sup>2</sup>

The reader is often reflected by the protagonist of novels such as

Butor's L'Emploi du temps where Revel's constant decipherment of books, paintings and other works of art as well as the "real" events surrounding him, reflect the reader's own activity of textual decipherment and interpretation.

As these examples indicate, and as Dällenbach points out, "mises en abyme énonciatives" are more often reflections of the act of production or reading rather than strictly mirror images of the writer or reader.

"Mises en abyme textuelles" reflect the literal aspect of the narrative:

A l'instar de cette réalité à deux faces qu'est le signe linguistique, l'énoncé peut être ou appréhender dans sa référence à autre chose, ou saisi en lui-même. Aussi donne-t-il lieu par constitution à deux mises en abyme distinctes: l'une fictionnelle, dédoublant le récit dans sa dimension référentielle d'histoire racontée, l'autre, textuelle, le réfléchissant sous son aspect littéral d'organisation signifiante. 3

Thus the cigar box description in Leçon de choses whose function we shall be examining in chapter three, may be described as a textual "mise en abyme" since it assembles and distributes certain dominant "signifiés" and "signifiants" throughout the novel. "Mises en abyme métatextuelles" reflect the workings of the novel. Thus the description of the cartoon strip which we saw in la Bataille de Pharsale acts as a metatextual "mise en abyme" since it is a miniature reflection of the triptych structure of the whole novel. Finally, the concept of "mise en abymetranscendante" is the least straightforward of the five categories put forward by Dällenbach:

En raison de son aptitude à révéler ce qui transcende, semble-t-il, le texte à l'intérieur de lui-même et de réfléchir, au principe du récit, ce qui tout à la fois l'origine, le finalise, le fonde, l'unifie et en fixe les conditions a priori de possibilité, cette nouvelle mise en abyme nous a paru devoir figurer à notre répertoire sous le nom de mise en abyme transcendante. 4



The main difficulty arising from this concept is that since the phenomenon does not reflect any internal element in the novel its status as "mise en abyme" must be doubtful. Dällenbach's answer would be that a transcendental "mise en abyme" reflects the novel in question indirectly, by mirroring the metaphysical or philosophical and historical background out of which each particular novel has grown. One may argue that it is this very matter of "indirectness" which diverts the phenomenon of its status as "mise en abyme" since the reader's participation is now sufficiently necessary for it no longer to be an internal operation. Indeed, as Dällenbach admits, this transcendental activity seems to be a mixture of fictional "mises en abyme" (it is fictional because it takes the form of metaphor, "métaphore d'origine") and metatextual "mises en abyme" (since its task of defining "les conditions de possibilité du récit" involve defining the "mode de fonctionnement"<sup>6</sup>). Consequently the case for its status as a separate category of "mise en abyme" is weak.

Although all five categories (despite reservations over the fifth) of "mise en abyme" are valuable and relevant in a poetics of a modern text, only three of them rigorously match the basic definition of "mise en abyme" which Dällenbach proposes at the start of his book: "est mise en abyme toute enclave entretenant une relation de similitude avec l'oeuvre qui la contient".<sup>7</sup> The basic feature, therefore, is a relationship between container and content. Only fictional, textual and metatextual "mises en abyme" conform strictly to this definition. The delineation of this basic feature leads us to our own discussion and categorization of the concept of "frame" in part I chapter one. According to our definition, "mise en abyme" is a type of frame within frame in which the content of the inner frame, or "enclave", reflects

the content of the outer frame. We may thus describe the phenomenon of "mise en abyme" as "self-reflexive frame".

At one point in Frame Analysis, Erving Goffman refers to Susan Sontag's discussion of the devices of self-reflexion which Jean-luc Godard employs in his films such as intermittent shots of the cameraman. The various techniques of self-consciousness, however, cannot, according to Sontag, ever succeed since we would also have to be shown the cameraman who is filming the cameraman filming the film and so on ad infinitum. Goffman adds:

Sontag only fails to note that this evidence of bad faith holds not merely for Godard and not merely for tricky filmmakers but for anyone in any frame who tries to convey something about the character of the frame he is employing; the posture he thereby assumes inevitably denies awareness of the frame in which that posture is struck. 8

Goffman's remark is unsatisfactory. Indeed, the cinematic analogy is itself inaccurate. The infinite regress perspective of an endless chain of cameramen filming one another is not necessary in order to achieve self-reflexivity in film. All that is required is a mirror reflecting the cameraman filming the film. No hidden trickery or deception would be at work here. However, while self-reflexivity can thus be achieved unproblematically in film, no exact equivalent can be found in fictional writing. Thus the author's "presence" in Miebla cannot be interpreted literally: the Unamuno who appears in the "nivola" and the one who composed it are not the same. The gap between fiction and reality remains unbridgeable. However, it is possible to interpret another form of textual self-reflexivity literally.

The self-reflexive nature of Simon's Triptyque and Leçon de choses is brought about by the recurrent use of fictional "mises en abyme".

However, unlike those one can find in his earlier work, such as the picture on the box lid in L'Herbe where the description acts as a general reflection of the whole novel or at least of its major features, in Simon's latest novels the different fictional "mises en abyme" reflect different parts of the novel in which they appear. These partial "mises en abyme", as we shall now see, are the prime agents of the pattern of intersequential conflict underlying Triptyque and Leçon de choses.

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Chapter Two

Triptyque: Topography or Topology?

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Triptyque, topologie d'un  
espace irrémédiablement  
multiple. <sup>1</sup>

1. Generative description.

The temptation to treat the text as a spatial object seems to have reached its climax amongst Simon critics with Triptyque. Inspired by the novel's title, they have been eager to discuss it in spatial terms, treating it in some cases literally as a triptych, and referring to its "panels". To this extent, despite the theoretical differences between S. Lotringer's "Cryptique" <sup>2</sup> and P. Jost's "Claude Simon: topographies de la description et du texte", <sup>3</sup> the articles are similar in their conception of the compositional aspect of Simon's novel. This "spatial" perspective posits a distinction between the "mise en abyme" descriptions and the metonymic chain of the text. Lotringer and Jost differ, however, in their evaluation of these two compositional elements. Lotringer dismisses the unifying tendencies of the novel's macro-structure in favour of the "migration de stèmes similaires" <sup>4</sup> which constitutes its micro-structure. For Jost, a "generative analysis" of Simon's novel is no longer adequate, while the structural, topographical analysis offers the reader "des plaisirs plus raffinés". <sup>5</sup> Consequently, Lotringer deprecates the function of the jigsaw puzzle, the film posters and the film strips as being the agents of unification in the text:

(les unités moléculaires postulent par définition et finissent toujours par imposer, une homogénéisation au niveau moléculaire). <sup>6</sup>

The analogy with biology helps to crystallise Lotringer's argument but it should also warn us of the potential weakness of such an argument.<sup>7</sup> The reference to the notions of "molecular" and "molar" is itself based on a dubious assumption that the text can be divided in this way. Is it true that there are some elements which can be called "intégrateurs romanesques" and others "désintegrateurs textuels" and that the former dominate over the latter in Triptyque? And is it also true that the sequence of the "noce" should be at the head of this hierarchical structure, thus forming "le pivot du roman"? Lotringer claims that the reason for the privileged position of this sequence is that it has only one "mise en abyme":

Il n'est par contre pas d'autre mise en abyme de l'histoire de la noce que celle de l'affiche même. [...] C'est en fait l'absence d'un simulacre propre qui fait de l'histoire de la noce le pivot du roman. 8

Lotringer's argument, however, is based on false premises since, as we shall soon see, the wedding sequence does have a second "mise en abyme": namely, the book being read by the woman in the beach resort sequence. This "mise en abyme" is also visual, in that the book cover contains three separate scenes from the narrative. It is consequently inaccurate, in the critic's own terms, to single out the wedding sequence as the "volet 'central', sur lequel semblent pivoter et se surimposer les deux autres compartiments".<sup>9</sup>

The spatial framework in which François Jost's critical approach is couched is even more blatant. The text as topography means that there is spatial order: a "map". The jig-saw puzzle, therefore, is for Jost the most apt image of the novel's composition:

Tout segment numéroté s'enchaîne avec le suivant par une transition associative.

Toutefois, certains mots auraient pu aiguiller la narration dans d'autres directions que celle qu'elle prend effectivement. Le cas fait c'est avant tout la topographie globale du texte qu'il faut tenter de comprendre pour expliquer le choix d'une orientation. 10

Jost's concept of "global topography" replaces Lotringer's postulation of a system of narrative hierarchy with one of a hierarchy of descriptions. Jost's analysis shows the determining force of the "mises en abyme" over the rest of the text. To a certain extent he is justified. For example, it may be true that the appearance of a few lines describing a couple against a wall (in the urban sequence, at the centre of a description of the clown performing in a circus) is motivated by the tear at the centre of the circus poster (in the countryside sequence) which reveals another poster showing the two lovers against the wall. However, can one justifiably speak of the lines of the urban sequence being at the centre of the circus description? Surely the reader does not have a "global" view of the text but moves "horizontally" from one description to the next. Is not the concept of "motivation" itself unhelpful since it implies that the motivating elements are at a remove from the rest of the text, treating them as points of origin which are not themselves produced or transformed by the generation of the text? Are not the "mise en abyme" descriptions, in Jost's terms, both "structurés" and "structurants" at the same time? Again the problem seems to arise from the critic's insistence on categorisation and on the delineation of a causal relationship between the different categories or "compositional units" of the text.

Instead of drawing a distinction between description and text, which would clearly be contradictory since the one is composed of the other, we can speak of "descriptions" and "narrative sequences". The latter

we are already familiar with. In Triptyque there are three main narrative sequences: the rural sequence which culminates in the drowning of the little girl may be called sequence A; the urban sequence in which an adulterous bridegroom returns to his bride after having been attacked in an alley on his wedding night, sequence B; the beach resort sequence which involves unclarified references to corruption, drugs, and infantile delinquency, sequence C. Unlike Les Corps conducteurs, however, Triptyque does not contain any description blocks. Instead there are the "mise en abyme" descriptions which, although similar in their disordering influence, are much more homogeneous and less fragmented than the description blocks of the earlier novel. But before proceeding with an analysis of these "mises en abyme" we must examine the significance of description in a more general sense in the context of Triptyque.

What exactly do we mean here by "description"? Firstly, the word refers to a process of articulation, of descriptive production or generation. In order to defend ourselves from Jost's accusation of looking too "closely" at the text <sup>11</sup>, we may say that description is not the "micro-units" which are placed in association but the process by which the associations are produced. Further, unlike description blocks in Les Corps conducteurs which were the process of association produced by the reader, description in Triptyque is a process of generation produced by the writing. In Ricardou's terms, the process is "actuel" and not "virtuel". The concept of "process" is particularly apt since it encompasses the problem of motivation.

The process of description in Triptyque is one of binary inter-relation: one description "feeds off" or "emerges from" another .

For instance, at the start of the novel the description of the postcard lying on the kitchen table contains a reference to the "ombrelles" carried by the people walking along the beach esplanade (p.7). Two pages later the description of the countryside contains a reference to the shape of some flowers:

Les tiges des ombrelles sont recouvertes d'un fin duvet blanc qui, dans le contre-jour, les cerne d'un halo lumineux. Sur les minces pedoncules s'évasant comme les baleines d'un parapluie et qui supportent le plateau des fleurs, les poils duveteux s'allongent, se rejoignent et s'entremêlent, formant comme un brouillard neigeux. (p.9)

The explicit comparison between the flowers and the umbrellas points to the linguistic association between "ombrelle" and "ombelle". The reader is being shown that the "ombelles" emerge textually from the "ombrelles" through a process of descriptive generation.

The relationship between the circus and the lovemaking (sequence B) descriptions is another case in point. Jost's interest in this relationship centres around two passages: one in which a few lines of the description from sequence B suddenly appear at the centre of the circus description, and the other which appears in sequence A (in which the film poster showing the lovers from sequence B can be seen through a tear in the circus poster which is superimposed on top of it. As we have said earlier, the "topographical" approach is unsatisfactory since the reader does not gaze at the novel spatially as he would a painting, but reads it as a text. Moreover the spatial perspective does not account for the relationship between the two descriptions at other moments in the novel. To a large extent the clown description "feeds off" the sexual description. Thus the "pantomime" action of the clown (p.117) echoes the "pantomime"



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movement of the lovers(p.104); the description of the spotlights in the circus, "un poudrolement argenté par le faisceau de lumière"(p.116) repeats that of a car's headlights in sequence B, "le poudrolement argenté de la pluie dans le pinceau des phares d'une auto"(p.115). Equally, the influence is inverted: thus, the clown's cry, "Vous êtes pas marteau !" (p.107), is repeated by the girl in sequence B, "T'es pas un peu marteau"(p.112); and the reference to the "sciure" on the café floor(p.132) echoes the reference to the "sciure" on the floor of the arena in the circus(p.23). In fact, the passage quoted by Jost (and dismissed by him as not explaining why the lines appear at the centre of the circus description) contains a self-conscious indication of this interpenetration of the two descriptions:

La sciure mouillée est de la même couleur que  
les bras noisette et la chevelure de la fille . (p.23)

A second self-conscious reference points out the similarity between the relationship of these two descriptions and the ombelle/ombrelle association mentioned earlier. The man and woman, their lovemaking at an end, trip along the alleyway, "comme ces morceaux exécutés pianissimo dans les cirques, conduits par la baguette distraite du chef à demi tourné vers la piste, servant de décor sonore et facétieux aux acrobaties ratées des clowns que ponctuent les sauvages éclats de rire du public invisible"(p.61). Metaphorical comparison is once more used not for an expressive purpose but as a means of stressing the binary structure of the process of generative description.

This auto-generative process of description is not restricted to these episodes in the novel. The description of the skimmed rabbit lying on a "plat de faïence blanche"(p.84) in the kitchen in sequence A "feeds off" the description of the woman in sequence C lying on the "draps

blancs" of her bed (p.81). In both descriptions there is a reference to the "cage thoracique". The anatomical comparison in the description of the rabbit is a repetition of the anatomical comparison in the description of the woman:

sur les membres et les différentes parties du corps dépouillé on peut voir comme sur une planche d'anatomie les muscles allongés, renflés en forme de fuseaux, qui s'entrecroisent, se tressent, s'étirent parallèlement où s'imbriquent les uns dans les autres. (p.84)

Selon une technique classique, l'artiste à l'aide d'un rouge de Venise qui s'éclaircit jusqu'au rose sur les reliefs, a d'abord modelé le corps en camaïeu, en détaillant avec soin l'anatomie comme sur ces planches des anciens traités de peinture, modelant chacun des muscles en forme de fuseaux ou de lanières qui s'entrelacent, se croisent et s'imbriquent les uns dans les autres. (p.81)

The "cameo" effect of the pink and red light in which the rabbit is bathed is a repetition of the pink and red cameo in the painting of the woman. The "reflets nacrés" (pp.84-85) shining on the rabbit's body reiterate the "couleur chair ou nacrées" (p.82) of the light in the painting. The rabbit's head, "ensanglantée" (p.85), echoes the "préparation sanglante" in the earlier description (p.82). Furthermore, the reference to the movement of the light-bulb in the kitchen description, sequence A, is "born out of" the description in sequence C, as we can see below:

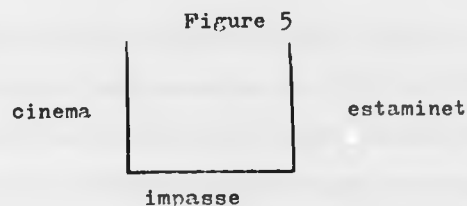
sans doute la femme [...] a-t-elle heurté  
avant de sortir le ruban [...] car celui-ci,  
l'abat-jour et l'ampoule se balancent légèrement.  
(p.85)

unique ampoule qui était probablement heurté  
par quelque échelle ou quelque partant, se  
balance au-dessus du lit [...] (p.82)

In both cases the words used to describe the movement of the shadows cast by the swinging light bulb are the same: "les ombres [...]"

s'étendent et se rétractent"(pp85 and 83).

Thus the terms of the description of the rabbit in sequence A are taken from the description of the woman in sequence C. What would the motivation be for the relationship of these two descriptions? Is it possible to speak of topography in this connection? The answer must surely be in the negative, for not only is there no spatial motivation but also the causal or hierarchical relationship (sequence A description emerging from sequence C description) is itself inverted at a later point in the novel (pp.150-151)(sequence C description emerging from sequence A description). The binary character of this descriptive process is echoed in the binary structure on the level of the narrative. Thus there are two erotic scenes: one which takes place in a barn in sequence A(seen through a hole in the wall(p.14)), and the other in an alley in sequence B (first glimpsed through the hole in the circus poster (p.20). Linked with this is the fact that there are two cinemas showing a film, one which is the barn in sequence A and the other the cinema flanking the alleyway in sequence B. In addition, the woman lying on the bed in sequence C is mirrored by the bride waiting for her husband in sequence B. Furthermore, the self-conscious reference to the fact that the same actor appears in the film posters of sequences B and C (p.96) can be interpreted as an indication of the binary structure we have been outlining. A second self-conscious reference to the binary nature of the relationship between the novel's descriptions is the depiction in sequence B of the "impasse" separating the "cinéma" from the "estaminet"(p.63). The reader, noting the assonantic inversion between the last two words, may justifiably interpret the setting as an image of the mirror inversions between two descriptions in Triptyque:



## 2. Metatextual "mises en abyme".

The triptych structure of Simon's novel allows the description of part of one of the three narrative sequences to overlap part of another. The pattern is indicated at the start of the novel in the description of the postcard in which the colours do not respect the contours of the objects:

L'encrage des différentes couleurs ne coïncide pas exactement avec les contours de chacun des objets, de sorte que le vert cru des palmiers déborde sur le bleu du ciel, le mauve d'une écharpe ou d'une ombrelle mordent sur l'ocre du sol ou le cobalt de la mer. (p.7)

In painting, especially in Cézanne's work, colour can operate an osmosis of objects. In fiction, it is language which produces an osmosis of descriptions. This disturbing activity of imbrication pervades the whole of Triptyque and is thus visually reflected in the postcard description at the start of the novel. This fundamental structure is also reflected at the centre of the novel in the description of the clown sequence. Before considering this passage, we should make a brief reference to the influence of Francis Bacon's paintings on Triptyque. Simon has often remarked on this influence which began at the Paris exhibition in 1971.<sup>12</sup> Not only was the title and structure of this novel suggested by Bacon's triptychs, but one of the three narrative sequences is inspired by the paintings (sequence C); the other two

sequences being inspired by the paintings of Delvaux (sequence B) and of Dubuffet (sequence A). More specifically, the structure of descriptive imbrication or overlapping, which is so basic to Triptyque, can also be found in Francis Bacon's work. A painting entitled "Three Studies of Isabel Rawsthorne" (1967) contains three depictions of the same person: inside a room, closing the door behind her with one hand on the door key; outside the room appearing in the narrow opening of the door; and in a portrait hanging on the wall. Each depiction can thus be said to be installed within its own frame. However, Bacon's portraits are, in his own words, "distorted images" whose autonomous flow is checked by the different motifs of fixity such as the Nazi armband or the hypodermic needle. <sup>13</sup>

I've used the figures lying on beds with a hypodermic syringe as a form of nailing the image more strongly into reality or appearance. <sup>14</sup>

Similar use is made of the rectangular frames appearing in so many of his paintings:

I use that frame to see the image - for no other reason [..] I cut down the scale of the canvas by drawing in these rectangles which concentrate the image down. Just to see it better. <sup>15</sup>

In "Three Studies of Isabel Rawsthorne" the distorted image of the portrait hanging on the wall spills out of the canvas and onto the white frame surrounding it where it is impaled with a nail. One may here immediately think of the contrary description in Les Corps conducteurs of the "masse gristire" being pushed out by the boxer in the painting (p.106). This image of inter-frame activity is clearly also relevant to Triptyque and its overlapping descriptions. However, it is the motif of fixity, the vain attempt to control the distorting flow of the images, which is present in the description of the clown act

at the centre of the novel. The clown, standing at "le centre de la piste", asks for a hammer to nail down the vamp of his shoe which periodically flies open emitting a series of loud barks. He is given a hammer but, on the point of striking his shoe, "son bras à mi-course", he realizes that it is tiny compared with the enormous size of his shoe. At this point the pun on "marteau" is made:

Il y a maintenant trois ombres sur la piste:  
les deux ombres divergentes du clown et celle  
de l'homme en habit éclairé par un seul  
projecteur qui découpe sur son visage des  
ombres dures. Doublant le dialogue parlé,  
les trois silhouettes plates et télescopées  
s'agitent sur le tapis aux couleurs forcées  
avec des mouvements à l'amplitude déformée.  
Le clown crie Je vous ai demandé un marteau  
mais maintenant je vous demande si vous êtes  
pas marteau! (p.108-9)

The clown hurls abuse at his partner while "vrillant son index ganté contre sa tempe et le faisant tourner plusieurs fois en même temps qu'il roule les yeux" (p.109). The interpretation of the metatextual qualities of this passage relies on three of its features. Firstly, the reference to the clown standing at the centre of the "piste" reflects *its position at the centre of the novel*. Secondly, the distorted movement of the three shadows on the ground reflect the shifting movement of the three narrative sequences in the novel. Thirdly, the clown, around whom the swivelling shadows are cast, may be interpreted as a fictional variant of the nail as image of fixity in Bacon's painting.<sup>16</sup> The pun on "marteau", the metaphor in "vrillant" and the business of nailing down the vamp urge the reader to note that the word "clown" contains phonetically the word "clou". The motif of fixity is thus not to be taken at all seriously. The clown is a figure of ridicule and, as his tail which curls up into the shape of a question mark indicates (p.198), of uncertainty. This paradoxical quality of the

references to "clou" as symbol of fixity reappears in another metatextual "mise en abyme", the description of the doors on the rabbit cages in narrative sequence A:

Les portes se ferment au moyen d'un loquet rudimentaire, un simple morceau de bois qui pivote autour d'une vis et vient se coincer dans une gâche constituée d'un gros clou recourbé au marteau et rouillé. (p.160)

The nail, therefore, is the hinge-point between the different panels of the triptych, the point of connection between the shifting descriptions. The fact that it is rusty should guard the reader against attempting to discover a point of fixity or centrality which is too solid and secure.

A second pervasive metatextual "mise en abyme" in the novel is the camera. The motif recurs throughout either in references to static pictures and photos, or in references to films shown in the cinema, or to shooting in a production studio. Its metatextual function lies in the fact that the camera motif reflects the descriptive flow of the text. The novel opens with a description of a postcard next to the skinned rabbit on the kitchen table. The kitchen door opens onto a courtyard which gives onto a plum orchard which stretches out to a river which runs under a bridge close to which stands the church which is separated from the road by a "terre-plein planté de quatre vieux noyers". The river runs to a hamlet out of which a road, leading to the saw-mill at the foot of the water-fall, forks and, passing by a barn, climbs up the valley. The description thus "pans" through the setting like a mobile film camera moving from one object to the next. The over all effect is one of an attempt at exhaustivity.<sup>17</sup> This reading of the movement of the writing is explicitly corroborated when the same sequence is framed as a film:



Un long travelling suit la course des deux  
garçons derrière lesquels, de droite à gauche,  
glisse le fond de feuillages (p.148)

The impossibility of achieving "linear exhaustivity" is symbolized by the point at which the road forks and the writing must choose between one route and another. A fundamental discrepancy is emphasized between the linearity of description and the "profusion foisonnante" of its referent.<sup>18</sup> The description thus reaches, as Ricardou would say, a point of "enlissement". The point at which the road forks and the contiguous flow of the description is checked introduces the second aspect of the camera motif as a metatextual "mise en abyme". The panning movement of the description is substituted by three static or "photographic" descriptions:

De la grange on peut voir le clocher. Du pied  
de la cascade on peut aussi voir le clocher  
mais pas la grange. Du haut de la cascade on peut  
voir à la fois le clocher et le toit de la  
grange. (p.9)

The search for exhaustivity is once more present in a descriptive perspective. However, unlike the "horizontal" movement of the first perspective, the attempt at total inclusion is now made from a static, dominating position. The top of the waterfall provides a vantage-point from which both the steeple and the roof of the barn can be seen. Following this perspective, the "descriptions surplombantes"<sup>19</sup> recur throughout the novel. Each narrative sequence is framed by at least one such description: sequence C by the picture postcard; sequence A by the jig-saw puzzle; and sequence B, slightly different in that it is a mixture of the two perspectives, filmed from above by a movie camera:

Sans doute la caméra a-t-elle été hissée  
au sommet, soit d'un clocher, soit encore  
de l'un de ces échafaudages de poutrelles  
métalliques qui s'élèvent au-dessus du

puits d'une mine et qui dominant l'agglomération,  
mais en tout cas dans l'axe de la longue artère,  
car l'on découvre celle-ci en vue plongeante,  
faiblement éclairée de loin en loin par les  
réverbères. (p.126)

The aerial framing of each of the three narrative sequences can be seen as an image of the search for total inclusion. However, if the first perspective fails on account of its linearity (as well as by the very fact of its movement), the second fails through its inability to provide a diameter wide enough to englobe the entire referential plane. Thus the "pullback dolly shot" of the boys peeping at the lovers through a hole in the barn wall, can be interpreted as the movement of the description towards total inclusion:

tandis que le mouvement de la caméra se  
poursuivant les deux s'éloignent, comme  
aspirés en arrière et rapetissant, aspirant  
avec eux la piste du cirque, le compteur  
aux bottes et à la chevelure cosmétiquées [.] (p.90)

It is interesting to note that the text escapes from the involuted engulfing swirl of the description by "cutting" to a description of a notice pinned on the wall of the church, one of the objects sucked onto the screen:

A l'intérieur du cadre se trouvent muraisés  
le recto et le verso d'un bulletin paroissial  
dont le premier est ornée dans sa partie  
supérieure d'une croix entourée de rayons,  
un horaire des offices en caractères de ronde  
appliquée où alternent les pleins et les  
déliés, et une image imprimée, sommairement  
coloriée, représentant de jeunes garçons  
coiffés de bérets sur lesquels est épinglée  
une petite croix de métal [.] (p.91)

The two metatextual "mises en abyme" we have been considering (the clown description and the cine/photographic perspectives) reflect the same quality in the compositional structure of Triptyque. If the one

underlines the unsteadiness of the points of fixity or centrality, the other depicts the absence of a global frame. In both cases, it is the analogy between text and space which breaks down.

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### 3. fictional "mises en abyme".

The absence of an effective global "mise en abyme" in a novel like Triptyque which is founded on the principle of self-reflexivity, means that it is impossible to apply an interpretative reading which would single out any one fictional element or theme over another. The "mise en abyme" of the picture on the biscuit tin in L'Herbe which reflected Louise's predicament in the novel may lend support to a "selective reading".<sup>20</sup> In Triptyque, however, such foregrounding is impossible. In fact, here the principle at work is one of partial fictional "mises en abyme" which, as Dallenbach says, "ne représentant chacune qu'un des trois lieux, elles ne sauraient mettre la fiction en abyme dans son intégralité".<sup>21</sup> Instead of a global perspective ordering the different parts of the novel into a continuous hierarchy, the use of partial fictional "mises en abyme" ensures a hierarchical deadlock between the different parts of the narrative:

Au niveau des macro-structures, tout l'intérêt de Triptyque tient en effet à l'équilibre qu'il réalise entre trois séries dont chacune exerce sa suprématie sur les deux autres en les contenant sous forme de représentation.<sup>22</sup>

The uncompromising pattern of dis coherence is thus the result of the relentless conflict between the three narrative sequences each of which dominates and is dominated by another through the multiple use of "captures" or "framings".<sup>23</sup> For example, sequences A and C are both framed as film posters outside the cinema in sequence B (pp.64-5). The

latter, on the other hand, is itself framed as a film poster on the barn wall in sequence A (pp.14,44,94-5,145) and as a novel being read by the actress in sequence C (pp.126,216-7). In fact, the three descriptions are closely related in the play of repetition illustrated in Figure 6 :

Figure 6

| Frame:   | Pages 64-5              | Pages 94-5              | Pages 216-7              |
|----------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
|          | 2 posters in sequence B | 2 posters in sequence A | Book cover in sequence C |
| Content: | description of seq.C    | description of seq.C    | -                        |
|          | description of seq.A    | description of seq.B    | description of seq. B    |

The play of descriptive repetition examined at the start of this chapter is again at work here. The film posters of sequence C, despite appearing in two referentially independent narratives, are described in almost identical terms:

la première des deux bandes tranche sur un fond bleu nuit où s'égrènent comme un chapelet de perles les globes de lampadaires à la lueur desquels on entrevoit vaguement un alignement de palmiers et des architectures pompeuses 77 (p.64)

Sur l'une des bandes on peut lire le mot PROCHAINEMENT et sur l'autre la mention CETTE SEMAINE qui se détache sur un fond bleu nuit où s'égrènent comme un chapelet de perles les globes de lampadaires à la lueur desquels on entrevoit un alignement de palmiers et des architectures pompeuses 77 (p.94)

The two passages go on to mirror each other almost word for word. The only difference between them is an inversion in the use of the word "éploré" and "angoisse". In the first passage the woman's face is "encore belle à l'expression angoissée" and her hand is held against her mouth "d'un geste éploré". In the second passage her face is

"encore belle à l'expression éplorée" and her hand is held against her mouth "d'un geste d'angoisse". This detail of inversion in an otherwise straightforward reiteration can be taken as a pointer to the contrary pattern of association between the two posters in the same passages. Here one can identify a detail of analogy in the two otherwise totally unrelated descriptions. The description of the film poster of sequence A in the first passage and that of sequence B in the second are linked by the repetition of one "signifié". The "visage éploré" (p.66) of the mother in the first description is echoed in the "yeux noyés" (p.95) of the bride in the second description. The structural significance of this repetition lies in the fact that the mother in the first passage is crying at the drowning of her little girl. Thus, the "yeux noyés" in sequence B reflect the "noyade" in sequence A.

One of the best descriptions of the "topological" nature of Simon's novel has been formulated by Jean Ricardou:

D'autre part, chaque lieu finit par être une image dans l'autre: l'esplanade de palmiers est carte postale dans une cuisine du village campagnard et, inversement, la grange agricole propice aux rencontres amoureuses est gravure galante, à quelques détails près, dans la chambre du palace azuréen. Aperçus comparables à une bouteille de Klein où l'intérieur parvient à englober son extérieur; paradoxes topographiques par lesquels seiface, nous le savons, toute prétention à la hiérarchie. Nulle séquence enfin, en ce traitement égalitaire, qui puisse prétendre, davantage qu'une autre, à mettre en abyme telle ou telle caractéristique des récits imbriqués. La mise en abyme se rencontre encore, certes, mais, comme on vient de le voir avec la carte postale et la gravure galante, elle forme un moyen pour passer d'un lieu dans tel autre. C'est ce qu'on pourrait nommer une "mise en abyme transitaire".<sup>24</sup>

The following is a list, in their order of appearance, of the "paradoxes topographiques" or "framings" in Triptyque:

Figure 7

Narrative sequence A = countryside, "noyade" sequence.  
 Narrative sequence B = urban, "noce" sequence.  
 Narrative sequence C = beach resort, "Nice" sequence.  
 ? = unframed description.

| Sequence A                     | Sequence B               | Sequence C                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                |                          | A p.7 (postcard)              |
|                                | A p.14 (film poster)     | A p.27 (negatives)            |
|                                |                          | B p.33 (film)                 |
| C p.42 (gravure)               | A p.44 (film poster)     | B p.52 (film)                 |
| B p.64 (film poster)           |                          | B p.64 (film poster)          |
|                                |                          | A p.80 (negatives)            |
|                                |                          | A p.84 (postcard)             |
| B p.90 (film)                  |                          | A p.94 (film poster)          |
|                                | A p.95 (film poster)     | A p.96 (negatives)            |
|                                |                          | A n.103 (film)                |
|                                |                          | B n.104 (film poster)         |
|                                | C p.126 (book)           | ? p.127 (painting)            |
|                                |                          | ? n.130 (film studio)         |
|                                |                          | B p.137 (picture on juke-box) |
|                                |                          | A p.137 (film)                |
|                                | A p.145 (film poster)    | A p.147 (film)                |
| ? p.148 (film)                 |                          |                               |
| ? p.160 (film)                 |                          | A p.171 (negatives)           |
| B pp.195-7 (film of eroticism) |                          |                               |
| C p.196 (gravure)              |                          | A p.200 (postcard)            |
|                                |                          | A p.215 (film)                |
|                                | C pp. 216-7 (book cover) | B p.219 (negative)            |
| C pp. 220-4 (jig-saw puzzle)   |                          |                               |

Thus the relationship between internal microcosm and external macrocosm upon which the traditional "mise en abyme" was based has broken down.<sup>26</sup> The three narrative sequences repeatedly swap roles

as microcosm or macrocosm, "contenu" or "contenant".

It should be noted, however, that "framings" or "captures" do not only consist of visual descriptions. Once more the snare of spatial perspective must be avoided. Although visual, or, as Lallenbach says, "specular" descriptions are by far the most prevalent fictional "mises en abyme" in Triptyque, "captures" do not necessarily have to be visual. The framing of sequence E as a book being read by the actress in sequence C (p.126) is thus a case in point. The essential aspect of this system of "discoherence" is the unremitting compulsion towards shift and transformation. Thus, there is shift in the interchange of hierarchy in the novel's narrative structure. And there is also shift in the production of "libérations" and "captures". (In other words, descriptions which are photographic or static invariably "break into filmic action" while descriptions of narrative sequences invariably "freeze into stills".) This double subversion of the novel's "topographical" perspective establishes Triptyque as "un espace impensable".<sup>27</sup>

Il est malaisé de se faire une idée de la disposition des lieux. (p.62)

Simon's text shifts emphasis away from the spatial content of the "mise en abyme" or its macrocosm and focusses on the hinge of association or "frame space" between them. It is for this reason that descriptions of the "scenes" of "captures" (or "ateliers" in Ricardou's terminology<sup>28</sup>) proliferate. The most striking "atelier" is the description of the studio set which forms one of the "framings" of sequence C:

l'espace trop vaste du studio dont les limites (les murs sales, le toit au-dessus des parterres) se perdent dans des ténèbres creuses ou résonnent, répercutés en échos, des bruits de marteaux, des grincements, et des voix multipliées. (p.131)

The "atelier" has a double role as "mise en abyme". It is a fictional "mise en abyme" in that it is the description of the framing of narrative sequence C as a film being shot in a studio. It is also a metatextual "mise en abyme" in that the limitless space of the studio reflects the descriptive search for a global frame which we examined earlier. Furthermore, the focus on the "cadre provisoire" in the following description of the same "setting" draws the reader's attention even more clearly to the subversion of the spatial perspective and the instability of the narrative framework which forms the basis of the novel's compositional structure:

Il se dégage de l'ensemble une sensation de vacuité, d'anonymat et de désolation, comme si les protagonistes n'étaient là que de passage, dans un cadre provisoire et factice auquel ils n'ont aucune part, disposé la veille par des machinistes prêts à démonter et isolé par des projecteurs comme une minuscule et éphémère îlot de lumière dans l'immensité du cosmos ou, plus simplement, d'un vaste hangar du studio, tout aussi noir et tout aussi vide. (p.172)

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#### 4. Frame shifts.

The involuted movement of the description referred to in the second section of this chapter was seen to be an image of the search for an all-inclusive outer frame. The way out of this perspective, we saw, was through focus on the contents of an internal frame within the global frame. (In that example, the description switched to a focus on the parish bulletin pinned on the church wall.) One can deduce from this that the fundamental instability of the overall hierarchical structure of the narrative is caused by an internal play of inclusion and exclusion in which the three narrative sequences are embedded in one another.



For instance, at the start of the novel sequence *B* develops out of the description of a film poster which is posted on the barn wall through which two boys peep at two people in the throes of lovemaking in sequence *A*. Sequence *C* develops out of a film being shown in the cinema in sequence *B* flanking the "impasse" which was shown in the film poster. The "setting" of sequence *C* is a luxury hotel room on the wall of which hangs a copper-plate engraving showing a "valet" and a "servante" making love in a "grange". The engraving contains an internal frame out of which two boys gaze on at the scene:

Dans l'encadrement d'une lucarne, au-dessus du couple, on peut voir les têtes de deux gamins rieurs qui contemplant le spectacle. (pp.42-3)

The shifts of narrative embedding produce a pattern of association which is less in the shape of an ordinary circle and more like the involuted form of a ring of Moebius.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that in each of the cases quoted the shift or escape is carried out through the space of an internal, embedded frame. If we turn to the central description of each of the novel's three chapters we will find a similar metatextual "mise en abyme" in each case reflecting this aspect of the novel's structure. At the centre of the first chapter one finds a description of an instance of sequence *A* in which the boy, distracted from his geometry homework, holds the magnifying-glass in the sunlight over a piece of paper:

Au centre du disque grisâtre projeté par l'ombre de la loupe sur la feuille de papier de soie que le garçon a sortie de son tiroir et posée sur la table après en avoir lissé les plis, apparaît un rond minuscule où se concentrent les rayons de soleil qui frappent la surface de la lentille. En dépit de l'attention du garçon, la main qui tient la loupe est agitée de légers mouvements auxquels correspondent sur le papier d'infimes déplacements du foyer lumineux que le garçon s'efforce de maintenir au même endroit. Au bout d'un moment, le papier

commence à roussir, puis, tandis que s'élève  
une légère fumée, un trou se forme, aux bords  
noircis qui vont s'élargissant. (pp.39-40)

Half-way through the second chapter one finds a description, also in  
sequence A, of a little girl on the point of swimming naked in the  
river and being spied upon by the same two boys mentioned earlier:

Une tache rousse flamboyant au soleil s'insère  
dans l'un des fragments. Agités par la brise les  
rameaux qui se croisent sont animés de faibles  
mouvements, montant et descendant, masquant et  
démasquant tour à tour la chevelure, le visage,  
les épaules et les bras d'une fillette debout  
derrière un buisson. La peau très blanche,  
laiteuse, semble concentrer sur elle la lumière  
ou plutôt, comme dans ces films surexposés,  
scintiller faiblement, comme si elle était elle-  
même une source de lumière. Le visage auréolé  
par la flamme orangée est parsemé de taches de  
son. (pp.118-9)

At the centre of the third chapter there is a description of the  
sexual act between the couple in sequence A, framed as a film in  
sequence B. An obvious echo of the previous central passage is the  
reference to the woman's "peau laiteuse". But there is also another  
analogy between the three central descriptions. The film suddenly  
jams, allowing the description, in a long sentence, to take stock of the  
spectacle:

Descendant le long de sa croupe les deux mains  
sombres gagnent peu à peu les fesses qu'elles  
écartent, découvrant leur sillon où la peau  
laiteuse se teinte progressivement de bistre  
en même temps qu'elle se plisse en étoile  
autour de l'anus que tout à coup la langue rouge  
et musclée de l'homme, presque noire dans la  
pénombre, vient lécher de sa pointe, le film se  
coince à ce moment précis dans l'appareil de  
projection et les deux protagonistes restent  
soudain figés dans cette posture, comme si tout  
à coup la vie se retirait d'eux, le temps cessant  
de s'écouler, l'image qui ne constituait qu'une  
phase passagère, un simple relais, accédant tout  
à coup à une dimension solennelle définitive,  
comme si les personnages avaient été tout à coup  
plaqués contre quelque muraille invisible et

transparente, pris au piteux dans l'air brutalement solidifié, passant d'un instant à l'autre à l'état d'objets inertes, choses parmi les choses qui les entourent sur la surface de l'écran et dont l'oeil, jusque-là accaparé par les formes mouvantes, prend alors peu à peu conscience [.../ jusqu'à ce que, comme pour confirmer l'impression de catastrophe, apparaisse une tache blanche, aveuglante, dont le pourtour roussi s'agrandit avec rapidité, dévorent sans faire distinction les deux corps enlacés, les outils et les murs de la grange, les lumières se rallumant alors, l'écran vide maintenant, terne et uniment grisâtre. (pp.194-5)

The three passages echo one another as "mises en abyme" of the structure of narrative shift as produced by internal embedding. Firstly, there is a link between the page in the first passage, the whiteness of the girl's skin in the second, and the screen in the third. Secondly, the colour "red" and its connotations of fire create another link. The magnified sunlight first reddens the page ("le papier commence à roussir") and then burns a hole in it; the girl's face is "auréolé par la flamme orangée" and her skin "très blanche, laiteuse, semble concentrer sur elle la lumière"; the "tache blanche" which grows out of the film in the third passage devouring the figures on the screen is encircled by a "pourtour roussi". The descriptions support each other in their function as "mises en abyme" of the subversive play of frame in the novel, like the description of the rusty nail from which hung the door of the rabbit cage which we saw earlier. This interpretation is further justified in the description of the sudden "freezing" of the pictures on the screen:

l'image qui ne constituait qu'une phase passagère,  
un simple relais, accédant tout à coup à une dimension  
définitive [.../]

Focus, therefore, is on the shifting nature of the "hinge of association" or "internal frame", and its effective subversion of "fictional space".

The repeated mention of the colour "red" in the three central passages

is juxtaposed, as we have seen, in each case with reference to the colour "white". Red or reddish-brown ("roux") is, in this case, associated with the subversion of "fictional space" or "global frame" which is symbolized by the colour "white". This subversion, as we have noted throughout this chapter, is produced by the generative force of the writing. This reading of the three passages can be further corroborated by turning to the first appearances of sequences B and C. Here red is associated with black. The central passages we have been examining and these initial instances or "moments of narrative generation" can be seen to be closely linked. The first appearance of sequence B contains a description of the lovers in the "impasse". It must be stressed that although a description of the poster showing the same scene has already appeared a few pages earlier, this is the first time there is any reference to movement. Ricardou would describe this as an instance of the process of "libération":

Au bout d'un moment on s'aperçoit cependant que  
le bras droit de l'homme qui maintient sa  
compagne le dos au mur est agité de faibles  
mouvements de va-et-vient [.] (p.19)

This, therefore, is the moment at which narrative sequence B is born. The reference to the man's bow-tie "nœud de papillon noir" reverts the reader's attention back to the description in sequence A of a butterfly alighting on a flower. The association, clearly, is produced by the repetition of "papillon":

Le papillon va finalement se poser sur une  
ombelle [.] (p.18)

The distinctive features of the butterfly are its "ailes rouges et noires". 30

The first instance of sequence C occurs shortly afterwards with the description of an enigmatic man standing in the corridor of a hotel

deciding on whether to enter a room or not. Once again, although sequence C may already be said to be present in the description of the postcard at the start of the novel, this is the first time that the sequence "comes to life":

Au bout d'un moment, soit indécision, soit que la porte se trouve fermée à clef de l'autre côté, la main lâche la poignée et retombe le long du corps [...] (p.23)

The man's bird-like appearance, "une de ces silhouettes d'oiseaux immobiles" (p.22) reverts the reader's gaze back to the description immediately preceding in which a lady-bird, having explored the white flowers of an "ombelle" finally flies away:

Une coccinelle à la carapace rouge semée de points noirs disposés symétriquement progresse avec lenteur sur le plateau rond, à la surface inerte, que forme la réunion des petits fleurs blanches de l'ombelle [...] Brusquement elle soulève ses élytres, laissant apparaître ses fines ailes noires et transparentes qu'elle déplie, puis prend son vol. (p.22)

The similarities between this passage and the butterfly one can now be seen to be very clear. Firstly, both passages "induce the birth of" a new narrative sequence. Secondly, the butterfly and the lady-bird (both endowed with the ability to fly) are similarly coloured red and black. Thus red is associated with the subversive, disruptive activity of the text since every time a new sequence is formed there is, as Dominique Lanceraux would say, an "éclat de narration". Thirdly, in both passages the surface traversed by the insects is the white disc formed by the bunching of the umbrella's white flowers. The reader may already be tempted to draw an analogy between the "ombelle" with its white "plateau rond" and the central passages of the three chapters in which the motifs of whiteness and circularity are heavily underlined. Such an interpretation would be further justified if the reader, urged on by the chain of associations in the text, turned back to the first

reference to "ombelles" near the start of the novel. We have already examined this passage and have noted its metatextual reflection of the binary nature of the process of generative description: <sup>31</sup> firstly, the alternation between focus on "ombelles" and focus on "clocher" indicates the spatial problem facing any attempt at establishing a global frame; and secondly, the play on "ombelles" and "ombrelles" produces an imbrication or overlapping between descriptions which answers the problem posed by the search for spatial exhaustivity by stressing that the space of a written text is totally linguistic and that language can never reproduce reality (though it may refer to it) but must always produce fiction. The only space which one can speak of in this respect is, therefore, that produced by the inter-relations of different parts of the novel both on the level of "signifiés" and "signifiants". It is this "textual space" which is mirrored in the description of the "ombelles":

Les tiges des ombelles sont recouvertes d'un fin duvet blanc qui, dans le contre-jour, les cerne d'un halo lumineux. Sur les minces pédoncules s'évasant comme les balcons d'un parapluie et qui supportent le plateau des fleurs, les poils duveteux s'allongent, se rejoignent et s'entremêlent, formant comme un brouillard neigeux. (p.9)

The criss-cross network of the "poils duveteux" provides an excellent "mise en abyme" of the textual associations in Simon's novel. Moreover, this description is itself indirectly related to the central description of each chapter through the chain of associations we have been following. It is also directly related to the central description of the central chapter. The "visage auréolé" of the little girl is a repetition of the "halo lumineux" on the stems of the "ombelle". The reader is thus invited to see the motif of the white surface encircled by a red contour as a "mise en abyme" of the text constantly transformed by the

subversive structure of frame shift.

An example of a particularly active sequence of frame shifts can be found in chapter two in the novel. The passage develops in the following way: (p.126) the alley-way episode in sequence B is framed as a film (references to "caméra" and "écran"); (p.126) the same incident, a few lines later, is framed as a novel being read by the woman in sequence C ("Arrivée à ce point du récit qui, d'ailleurs, clôt un chapitre, la femme interrompt sa lecture"); (p.127) the hotel episode in sequence C is itself framed as a painting ("Il semble que l'artiste ..."); (p.130) the same description is framed a few lines later as the shooting of a film in a studio (references to "la voir du metteur en scène", "techniciens", "acteur", "actrice"); (p.131) the actress in sequence C picks up the book she was reading before and "fouillote en arrière". At this point an ambiguous sentence opens on to a long, unbroken passage of sequence B in which the events (hitherto not described) leading up to the incident in the "impasse" unfold:

La sonnette annonçant le début imminent de la  
séance s'est tue depuis quelques instants  
quand parvient du dehors le fracas de deux  
voitures qui semblent se pourchasser. (pp.131-2)

The reader's initial reaction is to identify the "sonnette" and the "séance" as the bell announcing the next "take" in the studio since the sentence follows on immediately from a reference to the lights being switched on again and the actress taking up her position. However, such an identification would involve a fundamental contradiction since the sentence refers to an episode of sequence B and not one of sequence C. If, on the other hand, the "sonnette" and the "séance" referred to the warning bell in the cinema showing the film of sequence B, there would still be a clash. Firstly, sequence B has just been framed as a book,

and secondly, more important, in what spatial context is the reference to "behors" made? It cannot mean outside the cinema since the events would be taking place on the screen inside. The lines remain in a topologically undefined context where, nevertheless, sequence B and sequence C briefly meet.

Thus, the entire sequence of descriptions we have just analyzed provides a striking example of a syntagmatic chain of descriptions the junctures (or hinge-points) of which provoke fundamental breaks in narrative perspective (or frame shifts). Compared with the smooth "panning" movement of the description at the start of the novel, the text now reveals itself as a "mosaic" or mosaic of disconnected parts. The passage we have been looking at moves from one scene to the next through a system of frame shifts culminating, as we saw, in a sentence the referential context of which remains firmly rooted in what Dallenbach would call "l'espace impensable" where separate narrative sequences meet contrary to the logic of narrative discourse.

The meeting-points or "junctures" between separate narrative "isotopies" are reflected in, for instance, the "zones floues" separating the three images on the film poster (p.96). Once again the self-reflexive bent of the writing turns our attention to frame. Similarly, the movement of the description at the start of the novel consciously highlights the same phenomenon:

Les bois qui couvrent les flancs de la vallée  
sont bordés de taillis de noisetiers, et de  
charmes. Leur lisère serpente le long des prés  
en pente, dessinant des courbes, des colles et  
des caps dont l'un atteint presque l'arrière de  
la grange. (p.11)

A few lines later, the same metaphors are used but this time referring to the clouds in the sky:



De l'endroit où se trouve la grange on entend distinctement le bruit puissant et continu de la cascade répercuté par les falaises de roches grises apparaissant çà et là entre les feuillages touffus des bois sur les pentes abruptes de la vallée qu'elles couronnent parfois, couronnées elles-mêmes par des bouquets d'arbrisseaux dont les racines s'enfoncent dans leurs interstices et dont les troncs malingres se tordent devant le ciel où les nuages glissent calmement, leurs contours sinueux ou dentelés se déformant sans cesse, dessinant des boursofflures, des golfes et des caps qui saillent, se creusent et se déchirent. (pp.11-2)

The reflection of the earth in the sky, produced by the repetition of the metaphors, may be said to be in the style of "l'univers réversible" of baroque poetry.<sup>32</sup> The importance here is that an osmosis is achieved between two descriptive referents by means of the language of description. The text indicates that the importance of this inversion is the phenomenon of frame break by the fact that the metaphors whose repetition produce the osmosis are, precisely, images of frame or contour.

The same metaphors reappear throughout the novel each time in a different descriptive context. Indeed each of the three narrative sequences contains a reference to the same frame or contour.

Sequence A is framed at the end of the novel as the picture in a jig-saw puzzle in sequence C. The jig-saw puzzle also serves as a mirror-image of the whole novel not because of the reader's ability to reassemble all the parts into a unified whole but because each of its parts has an irregular contour fragmenting the continuity of the visual content:

leurs découpures méandreuses ont été calculées de façon qu'aucune d'entre elles, prise isolément, n'offre l'image entière d'un personnage, d'un animal, d'un visage même. A part de très rares exceptions [...] leur ensemble présente toute la gamme variée des verts [...] et elles forment comme un archipel de petites îles creusées de baies, de golfes,

hérissées de caps, sur le fond rouge de la  
moquette. (p.224)

Sequence B contains a description of the couple in the alleyway  
which overlaps onto two other descriptive contexts or "isotopies":

Les formes agrandies et emmêlées des feuilles  
ovales balaient indifféremment les visages  
douloureux de la femme aux doigts enroulés,  
celui de la jeune mariée, le chapelet de perles  
des globes lumineux qui s'étire le long du golfe  
et l'impasse obscure où les deux silhouettes,  
obscurées elles aussi, au contour cerné d'une  
auréole par la lumière qui vient de la rue,  
exécutent au ralenti une sorte de pantomime  
qui tantôt rapproche les deux corps, les confondant,  
tantôt les sépare. (p.104)

We have already seen that the pantomimic attitude of the couple produces  
an association with the clown sequence.<sup>33</sup> Equally, the swaying movement  
of the "feuilles ovales" and the reference to the "auréole" of light  
produce an overlapping association with the central description (p.119)  
in which the girl whose face is "auréolé par la flamme orangée" is  
glimpsed by the two boys through the swaying movement of the branches  
of an oak tree. In addition, the shadows of the leaves mingling with  
pictures on both film posters produces a reaction in their content a  
few pages later when the "impasse" is said to be covered "de petits  
flots de lumière qui révèlent les façades rougeâtres et violacées et vont  
décroissant. Entre les réverbères s'étendent de larges zones d'ombre" (p.114).  
The reference to "flots de lumières" is an echo of the "globes lumineux"  
bordering the "golfe" in the poster of sequence C.

Finally, sequence C is framed as a film (shown in the barn in sequence  
A) the opening shot of which shows an aerial view of a seaside town:

un commentaire [...] accompagnant le lent  
déplacement, sur le fond noir, d'un chapelet  
ininterrompu de lumières dessinant les formes  
de golfes, de péninsules, de caps et de jetées  
qui glissent de droite à gauche. Sur la plage  
de ténèbres, rien, de part et d'autre des festons

lumineux, ne permet de distinguer la mer de la terre /.../ (p.138)

In conclusion, we may note that the contour or frame separating one description from another, one narrative sequence from another, is itself a "zone *floue*" like the demarcation line between land and sea. It is the writing which in Triptyque produces an osmosis of contexts or, in our terminology, frame shift.

Once more we must turn to Froust for the source of inspiration behind Simon's writing. Here it is Elstir's paintings which provide a model for the frame shifts structuring Triptyque. The "port de Carquethuit" painting produces a fusion between sea and land making it impossible for the onlooker to "reconnaitre de frontière fixe, de démarcation absolue, entre la terre et l'océan".<sup>34</sup> Furthermore this fusion of land and sea is to be understood as an example of metaphor and thereby of "poetic" writing:

C'est par exemple à une métaphore de ce genre - dans un tableau représentant le port de Carquethuit, /.../ - qu'Elstir avait préparé l'esprit du spectateur en n'employant pour la petite ville que des termes marins, et que des termes urbains pour la mer. Soit que les maisons cachassent une partie du port, un bassin de calfatage ou peut-être la mer même s'enfonçant en golfe dans les terres, ainsi que cela arrivait constamment dans ce pays de l'Elbec, de l'autre côté de la pointe avancée où était construite la ville, les toits étaient dépassés (comme ils l'eussent été par des cheminées ou par des clochers) par des mâts, lesquels avaient l'air de faire des vaisseaux auxquels ils appartenaient, quelque chose de citadin, de construit sur terre, impression qui augmentait d'autres bateaux, décurés le long de la jetée, mais en rangs si pressés que les hommes y causaient d'un bâtiment à l'autre sans qu'on pût distinguer leur séparation et l'interstice de l'eau et ainsi cette flotille de pêche avait moins l'air d'appartenir à la mer que, par exemple, les églises de Cricquebec qui, au loin, entourées d'eaux soufflées en albâtre ou en écume et, enlées dans la ceinture d'un arc-en-ciel vernicolore, former un tableau irréel et mystique.<sup>35</sup>

The "golfe" contours in Elstir's paintings and in Simon's novel are thus not explicable in terms of spatial topography but of linguistic topology.<sup>36</sup>

### Chapter Three

#### Leçon de choses: frame Conflict

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##### 1. Preterition.

"The critical polemic which Francois Jost attaches to his analysis of the "nouveau roman" is misguided and unnecessary. His attacks on the Ricardolian analysis of the text as a "simple machine à transits" <sup>1</sup> are unjustified within the context of his own and of Ricardou's critical methodology. <sup>2</sup> The main problem seems to lie in the fact that Jost sees a distinction or antithesis where indeed there is none. His contention is that the "théorie des générateurs" does not describe the "rapports dynamiques mis en jeu par leçon de choses". <sup>3</sup> He further claims that the final paragraph in "Générique" paradoxically rejects the "théorie des générateurs" simply by stating:

La description (la composition) peut se continuer  
(ou être complétée) à peu près indéfiniment selon  
la minutie apportée à son exécution, l'entraînement  
des métaphores (p.10)

It is certainly not at all clear why this perfect description of textual "enlissement" should be interpreted as an ironical comment. Indeed Jost admits that the seascape painting at the start of "Expansion" is born out of the figurative elements in the description of the wall-paper in "Générique":

Au-dessous du minuscule et immobile déferlement  
de vagues végétales qui se poursuivent sans fin  
sur le galon de papier fané, l'archipel crayeux  
des morceaux de plâtre se répartit en flots  
d'inégales grandeurs comme les pans détachés d'une  
falaise et qui se fracassent à son pied. (p.10)

Jost rightly notes; "Sur cette métaphorisation une fiction va se bâtir sans doute." But why then deny the generative perspective of the production of the text? The main reason seems to be that Jost establishes

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Jost rightly notes; "Sur cette métaphorisation une fiction va se bâtir sans doute." But why then deny the generative perspective of the production of the text? The main reason seems to be that Jost establishes

an artificial distinction between the "telestructural composition" of a text and its "consecution litteral" in which the two perspectives are, somehow, opposed. The logical development of such an approach is the construction of a rigid system in which analysis is seen to provide an "explanation" or definitive description of the composition of a novel. The dangers of a topographical perspective which we saw with reference to Triptyque re-emerge.

Jost claims that Leçon de choses is not built on a system of "transits" but of preterition:

C'est à partir de ce qu'il ne dit pas (c.f. "Ainsi il n'a pas été dit ..." "Il n'a pas fait mention ...") que le roman va se développer. Le schéma simple présentation du matériel à travailler ("générateurs") - disposition de ce matériel (récit éclaté) n'est plus un modèle d'explication suffisante. 4

The opposition of the function of transition and of preterition is false. Preterition is, precisely, one form of transition. The definition of this figure of speech is that it is a statement where the negative form is inverted: that is, a statement which does refer to what it says it will not refer to. It is true that preterition is often put into use in Leçon de choses. But, as we shall see in the following examples, far from having a different function to that of generative transition, it plays an important part in just such a pattern of transition.

Quand elle voit tout près dans l'obscurité la pastille incandescente du cigare elle a comme un haut-le-corps, un recul, comme quelqu'un abasourdi par quelque illusion d'optique et se heurtant tout à coup à un obstacle prévu mais dont il a mal apprécié la distance comme de ces bateaux au loin sur la mer et soudain (parce qu'on a cessé de les suivre des yeux et quoique l'on sache que leur immobilité n'est qu'apparente) tout proches. La barque de pêche est maintenant au-dessous d'eux et longe le pied de la falaise. .... Loin devant la robe claire de la petite fille court sur le chemin en haut

de la falaise qui s'abaisse dans une déclivité, précédant les deux ombrelles qui oscillent en sens contraires comme des fleurs. Sur la falaise il n'y a pas de coquelicots. Elle entend sa voix. Il se détache de la barrière, et s'avance vers elle, noir dans le noir, précédé de la tache rouge du cigare qui semble suspendue dans la nuit. (pp.51-2)

The passage contains an oscillation between two sequences or rather, as will become clearer later on, between two time spans of the same narrative sequence. Sequence A1 is a description of a group of women walking along a cliff top. During the walk, the man escorting the group extracts a promise from one of the "promeneuses" (the mother of the little girl) to meet him alone that evening. Sequence A2 takes place at nightfall when the woman, having put her daughter to bed, runs off to the "rendez-vous" at the barrier by the edge of the wood where her lover awaits. The intersequential movement in the passage quoted above, therefore, is: A2 - A1 - A2. The first shift, from A2 to A1, is produced by the reference made to boats in the explicit comparison "comme ces bateaux" which immediately evokes the movement of the boats off the coast in A1. The second shift is produced by the reference to "coquelicots" in the preterition, "Sur la falaise il n'y a pas de coquelicots", which immediately evokes the "taches rouges du cigare" in A2. For an explanation of this shift we need to place the passage within the context of the whole chapter which evolves around the production of the whole of narrative sequence A. The first instance of sequence A reveals the textual play surrounding "coquelicots":

A gauche du bois, le terrain se relève en pente sur le versant d'un coteau planté d'arbres fruitiers clairsemés, comme un verger à l'abandon ou mal entretenu au sol couvert de longues herbes et constellé de pastilles (ombelles, coquelicots?) blanches ou rouges. Trois femmes au teint sans doute fragile qu'elles protègent du soleil par des ombrelles descendent la pente du verger. (p.16)

The shift here is from "ombelles" to "ombrelles".<sup>5</sup> But the presence of the taxemes, "rouge" and "coquelicot" is also striking since it is repeated at several instances of sequence A: for example, the "pavots d'un rouge passé" in the calendar picture (p.17). The explanation or motivation of this presence is that sequence A1 is to some extent born out of the description of the painting at the start of the chapter: "coquelicots" stems from "bataille de coqs" and from "coups de pinceau" by way of "ponceau" which can either mean "culvert" ("pour diriger le canon de l'arme sur le ponceau où sont entassés et enchevêtrés ..." (p.21)) or "corn-poppy". The shift from "coquelicots" to "tache rouge du cigare" in the passage we are examining is based on the association between poppies and the colour red. The shift, however, also depends on a metonymic, "telestructural" system of textual generation. An earlier reference to poppies, this time on the wall-paper in the builders' sequence (narrative sequence B) "Sur le papier sont représentés de grands coquelicots (pavots?)" (p.33), immediately follows the description of the cigar-box description which, as Jost notes,<sup>6</sup> acts as "mise en abyme" and agent of transformation in the production of sequence A2. The generative role played by the cigar-box description with regard to sequence A2 is reflected by the fact that it is only after this description that there is any mention of the man in sequence A smoking a cigar.

A second example of the use of preterition in the production of shift from one sequence to another, can be found in the second chapter of the novel:

Elle suit des yeux le vol affairé d'un irelon.  
A ras de terre se trouvent de petites fleurs  
jaunes. Il y a, là aussi, quelques scabieuses.  
[...] Dans sa position (seulement appuyée sur  
un coude), la jeune femme voit se balancer



mollement les hautes ombelles au-dessus de la chaîne des nuages boursoufflés qui se confondent presque avec le ciel. Le frelon va de l'une à l'autre où il ne se pose qu'un instant. Il parcourt plusieurs fois aller et retour l'intervalle qui les sépare, croisant ou dépassant le petit voilier qui se hâte dans l'encadrement des tiges légèrement inclinées. Son corps velu et trapu est d'un brun orangé, strié de noir. La vache ne figure pas dans le tableau. [...] Le chargeur lit lentement le titre de la reproduction punaisée sur le mur parmi les coquelicots géants: SUR LA FALAISE. (pp.91-93)

The preterition in "La vache ne figure pas dans le tableau" signals the motivation for the shift in the passage which begins as an instance of sequence A1 (the "promeneuses" on the coast) and ends as a description of a painting in an instance of sequence B (a reproduction of Boudin's "Sur la falaise" hanging on the wall of the farm-house occupied by the soldiers). The reference to the cow marks a contextual association with an earlier passage in the novel describing an instance of sequence B. This is the first reference to a cow in the novel:

Les rayons du soleil commencent à décliner. Ils frappent maintenant sous un angle différent les quatre piquets qui sortent de l'herbe du pré, encadrant la masse gonflée où l'on peut à présent reconnaître le ventre ballonné, blanc et rose, d'une vache couchée sur le dos et figée dans une complète immobilité. (p.22)

A comparison of the two passages shows the reader that the instance of sequence A1 in the first passage is highly influenced by or infiltrated with elements from sequence B in the second passage. The "encadrement des tiges" is an echo of the "quatre piquets [...] encadrant la masse gonflée"; the impression of movement given by the yacht, "comme si quelque main géante l'avait soulevé et reposé" (p.92), is a repetition of the impression produced by the position of the cow, "comme si on l'avait prise et retournée telle quelle, tout d'un pièce,

a la façon d'un jouet". The infiltration of sequence B within an instance of sequence A1 leads inevitably to the complete domination of the latter by the former: A1 is framed as a painting within B.

The two examples we have been considering clearly indicate that preterition is used as an indicator of the motivation of the inter-sequential transitions in the text. The statement that the cow does not appear in the painting (negative message on the denotative level of the statement) is also a signal of the presence of the original context of the cow in the description of the painting (affirmative message on the connotative level of the statement). But preterition is by no means the fundamental structure which Jost holds it up as being in Simon's novel. Preterition is one form of textual inclusion: one way in which the novel's intersequential conflict is produced. Another, more striking, way in which the different narrative sequences are inter-related is through the use of fictional "mises en abyme". It is the role played by the "mise en abyme" in the production of transformation in the novel which will be the central concern of this chapter. But before we proceed in our analysis we must consider the concept of "motivation" to which François Jost attaches great importance.

Jost presents the concept on two levels: what we may call "internal" and "external" motivation. The first, "motivation contextuelle restreinte" is another name for what we have called "intersequential activity".

chacune des séries entretient avec les autres  
des rapports de parenté qui motivent leur  
segmentation propre. 7

Thus, for example, the link between the "falaise" description (sequence A) and the description of the soldiers (sequence B) is motivated by the analogy between the paintstrokes in the former which are like flying

feathers "dans un poulailler après une bataille de coqs" (p.15) and the "concert de caquetage" accompanying the entry of the soldier in the latter description holding two chicken in his hands (p.19).

Jost also feels some necessity for an account of the external motivation of a text.

Mais ce que l'on voudrait expliciter en premier lieu c'est la raison pour laquelle ces trois séries - les maçons au travail, les soldats en guerre, un couple sur la falaise - et non d'autres sont l'objet du mélange structurel. Ce choix est-il arbitraire ou motivé?<sup>8</sup>

Jost recognizes that this type of pursuit, verging on considerations of origin and biography, is "un peu désuète" and entrenched in the perspective of "l'idéologie représentative". What is more relevant, however, (and this he does not admit) is that "external motivation" can be totally irrelevant to the activity of reading which the "nouveau roman" demands. This is not to say that biographical or external elements have not acted as "stimuli" for the writing. Simon has said that at the time of writing Leçon de choses he was having his house decorated.<sup>9</sup> It would be reasonable to presume that the sequence of the "maçons" was to some extent "motivated" by this event. But is this of any use or significance whatsoever to the reader of Leçon de choses? Clearly, in this case external motivation is of no consequence at all. The motivation of the war sequence is of greater interest to the reader since there are indications within the text that the sequence is linked with La Route des Flandres. This relationship, which is implicit or "virtuel" throughout most of the novel, is made explicit or "actuel" in "Divertissement II" in, for example, the references to "Chaude affaire" (p.122) and Keixach (p.123).<sup>10</sup> Of the three narrative sequences in the novel it is sequence A which can be of most interest to the reader in the light of considerations of external motivation.

In this case a more accurate term would be "intertextuality".

## 2. Intertextual motivation.

Critics have often been tempted to equate Simon's novels with specific schools of painting. Thus, André Rousseaux speaks of la Route des Flandres as an example of an "art impressioniste, dont le chatolement verbal est comparable à la peinture du même nom."<sup>11</sup> Tom Bishop has described the "cubist" qualities of Les Corps conducteurs,<sup>12</sup> and Maria Elisabeth Kronegger has described Simon's novels in general as being "impressionist", noting that the "overall harmony and the rhythm of Simon's work are all important. The rhythmic phrase form, the dynamics, the articulation, and the tone colour are basic in his work, as in impressionist creation."<sup>13</sup> The comparison with art is natural given the fact that Simon himself frequently refers to paintings, especially those by Cézanne, in his lectures and interviews. However, the novelist is also quick to point out the fundamental differences between painting and literature:

(l'écriture n'est pas la peinture, le pouvoir évocateur de la figuration picturale d'un corps est tout autre que celui de la description scripturale d'un corps, la peinture est surface, simultanéité, l'écriture est linéarité, durée, etc.)<sup>14</sup>

This basic difference between writing and painting does not, of course, rule out the possibility of using works of art as "stimuli" for fiction. In Leçon de choses, there are explicit references to Monet's "Effet du soir" and to Boudin's "Sur la falaise". It would, however, be false to suggest that Simon's text offers an accurate description of these two paintings any more than were the pictures in Orion Aveugle which served as "stimuli" for Les Corps conducteurs faithfully represented

in that novel. We have already seen that reference to the Boudin painting, which appears at the centre of "Leçons de choses", acts as a framing or "capture" of one of the narrative sequences within another. Indeed the interest lies more in the painter's name than in his painting. This is indicated in the pun made by the "chargeur" in sequence B on "boudin" meaning "sausage" (p.93). Another explicit play on the word appears a few lines later in a description of the fishermen's nets in sequence A:

Fenché sur la lisse, l'un d'eux les secoue  
dans l'eau, rassemblés en boudins, et ils  
ondulent comme de gros serpents bruns. (p.94)

The word "boudin" has several meanings and the text draws on them for its polysemic development, at times simultaneously playing with two meanings of the word. For example, "boudin" meaning "fat finger" is echoed in the focus on the fingers of the builder who cuts his thumb and which at first only shows a "bourrelet de peau".<sup>15</sup> The same polysemic play on "boudin" occurs when the woman on her way to the "rendez-vous" with her lover cuts her finger on broken glass and lets water run on it from the tap.<sup>16</sup> On the level of the fiction, the motifs of the poppy field, the "promeneuses" with their "canotiers" and "ombrelles" are all, of course, familiar themes of Impressionist paintings. But, as with "Boudin", Simon's text is more interested in the linguistic quality of, for instance, "coquelicots" and "ombrelles" rather than in their visual aspect. Sequence A can, therefore, be said to be a linguistic expansion of some visual stimuli based in Impressionist painting.

In the case of Madame Bovary, the relationship is slightly different. Firstly, this is an intertextual relationship between two novels. Secondly, as in the intertextual relationship between la bataille de

Pharsale, La Jalousie, and A la recherche du temps perdu, Simon's novel is both "stimulated" by Flaubert's work (in other words, expands and transforms some of its elements) and urges the reader to re-read the earlier novel in a similar way to the way he is reading the present book. In other words, Leçon de choses offers a reading of Madame Bovary. The Impressionist type setting in Flaubert's novel can be located in the episode depicting the relationship between Emma and Rodolphe, and it is this part of the novel which serves as a "stimulus" to Leçon de choses.

One can note an association between the two novels firstly by the naming of Flaubert's characters within Leçon de choses. Thus, the names Saint Charles and Sainte Emma appear in the list of saints on the calendar in sequence B (p.106). The similarities between Rodolphe and the lover in Simon's novel, and Emma's daughter, Berthe, and Evelyne, the daughter in Leçon de choses remain implicit, but no less striking. Apart from the characters, there are other elements in the fiction which can be found in Madame Bovary. The description of the "falaise" sequence with the fishermen rolling *their* nets in the background recalls the idyllic setting in Emma's dream, "un village de pêcheurs, où des filets bruns séchaient au vent, le long de la falaise et des cabanes."<sup>17</sup> But it is the sequence of the nocturnal "rendez-vous" of the two lovers in Leçon de choses which is most reminiscent of Madame Bovary. The repeated reference to the frogs' cries in the wood is an echo of the reference to the "grenouilles" around the pond when Rodolphe and Emma first go riding together.<sup>18</sup> The dominating presence of the cows frightening the woman in the love scene (p.102) is a reflection of the reference to Emma's fear of cows as she made her way to the "rendez-vous" at la Huchette.<sup>19</sup> The points of contact between the two novels are

multiple. The following is a passage taken from the description of Rodolphe and Emma's ride together:

Les ombres du soir descendaient: le soleil horizontal passant entre les branches, lui éblouissait les yeux. Ça et là, tout autour d'elle, dans les feuilles ou par terre, des taches lumineuses tremblaient, comme si des colibris, en volant, eussent éparpillé leurs plumes. Le silence était partout; quelque chose de doux semblait sortir des arbres; elle sentait son coeur, dont les battements recommençaient, et le sang circuler dans sa chair comme une fleuve de lait. Alors, elle entendit tout au loin, au delà du bois, sur les autres collines, un cri vague et prolongé, une voix qui se traînait, et elle l'écoutait silencieusement, se mêlant comme une musique aux dernières vibrations de ses nerfs émus. Rodolphe, le cigare aux dents, raccommodait avec son canif une des deux brides cassées. 20

The loud heartbeats and the metaphor of the stream of milk are reiterated in Simon's novel ("Son coeur bat violemment dans sa poitrine" (p.53) and "il regarde la coulée de chair laiteuse" (p.101)). Equally, the "cri vague et prolongé" is echoed in the cries of the frogs and the crickets in Leçon de choses and Rodolphe's cigar is mirrored by the focal presence of the lover's cigar in sequence A2. Thus many of the dominant elements in narrative sequence A2 in Leçon de choses are based on textual stimuli from Madame Bovary.

The interesting aspect of the associations which Simon's novel weaves with Flaubert's is that the elements in Madame Bovary are not only "stimuli" under transformation and expansion in Leçon de choses but play a structural role in Madame Bovary itself. One such example is the metaphorical play surrounding the word "voile". In sequence A1 the two would-be lovers look out to sea and to the fishing-boat at the foot of the cliff. Immediately, the description focusses on the woman's hat:

Le vent iodé joue avec le long voile vert  
qui entoure son canotier et le lui plaque  
sur le visage. (p.52)

The amphibological play in "voile" meaning "veil" and "sail" or, by synecdochic association "sailing-boat", and in "canotier" meaning "boater" (hat) and "oarsman" is shown to be at work in the production of the text at two later descriptions. The first is also an instance of sequence A1. The scene is the same as the one just mentioned with the difference that the lovers are no longer looking at the fishing-boat but at a yacht ("le voilier à la mâture inclinée?" (p.76)). The second description is that of an illustration in "Leçons de choses", the textbook being read by the "tireur" in sequence B:

Sur la mer calme, représentée à l'aide de fines lignes parallèles, à peine ondulées, on aperçoit deux voiles claires, triangulaires, l'une dans le lointain, et, au premier plan, une barque vue de face (ou de l'arrière, le mauvais encrage ou le demi-jour ne permettant pas de distinguer) de chaque côté de laquelle dépassent de longs avirons, l'un presque à l'horizontale, l'autre légèrement incliné vers le haut. Les franges de gouttelettes lumineuses, diamantines, pendent aux extrémités des rames d'où elles retombent dans la mer. On distingue sur le flanc bombé du canot des lignes qui suivent la courbe du bordage et se détachent dans le reflet doré du soleil sur la peinture noire. (pp.99-100)

For the motivation of this play on the associations between hats and boats through the exploitation of the amphibological potential of "voile", we can turn once more to Madame Bovary. One must stress again that this intertextual activity is not to be interpreted so much as an identification of origin or influence, but more as a signal to the reader of Simon's novel to go back to Madame Bovary and re-read it from a particular perspective. The following is a description of the hat worn by Emma on her first outing with Rodolphe:

à travers son voile, qui de son chapeau d'homme



descendait obliquement sur ses hanches, on distinguait son visage dans une transparence bleuâtre, comme si elle eût nagé sous des flots d'azur. 21

Influenced by Leçon de choses, the reader is alerted to the linguistic play in these lines. Thus, beneath the denotative level of the sentence in which "voile" refers to the veil on Emma's hat, the connotations of the sea "transparence bleuâtre", "flots d'azur" are produced by the simultaneous reference in "voile" to sailing-boats.

Another such reading of Madame Bovary centres round the word "boudin" whose multiple meanings have already been discussed with reference to Leçon de choses. Once again, "intertextual motivation" may be described as a "reading" of one novel by another. When Emma returns one morning from a night spent with Rodolphe at la Buchette she is startled by Binet who is illegally out duck shooting. Binet springs out of his hide-out, a barrel, "comme ces diables à boudin qui se dressent du fond des boîtes". Through a play of repetition the words "boudin" and "tonneau" produce a link between Charles and Binet: thus "boudin" appears in the description of Charles's hat ("Ovoïde et renflée de baleines, elle commençait par trois boudins circulaires") 22 and the "tonneau" out of which Binet springs reappears in the description of Charles's imagination which "assaillie par une multitude d'hypothèses, ballotait au milieu d'elles comme un tonneau vide emporté à la mer et qui roule sur les flots". 23 Thus the connotations of circularity and repetition contained in the word "boudin" can be seen to reflect the circularity and repetition underlying the textual composition of Flaubert's novel.

In conclusion, one can state that the intertextual relationship between Leçon de choses and Madame Bovary centres round the associative workings of description in both novels and depends upon an active

participation by the reader who produces the associations through his reading.

### 3. Intersequential conflict.

The "external motivation" of narrative sequence A2 is, as we have been arguing, based on an intertextual relationship with Madame Bovary. The "internal motivation" of the sequence is, as we shall now see, governed by a system of relentless intersequential conflict between the three main narrative sequences in Leçon de choses. To recap: sequence A relates the events concerning a group of "promeneuses" walking along a cliff top; sequence B relates events involving a group of soldiers hemmed in in a farm-house during the second world war; sequence C relates events concerning two builders redecorating a dilapidated farm-house. A glance at Figure 8 shows that the pattern of "captures" or narrative framings between the three sequences differs from the one which was at work in Triptyque:

Figure 8

| <u>Sequence A1</u>    | <u>Sequence A2</u> | <u>Sequence B</u> | <u>Sequence C</u> |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| C (Monet) p.15        | C (spatial) p.137  | A (newspaper)     | B (book) p.23     |
| C (window) p.15       | C (spatial) p.160  | p.181             | B (book) p.24     |
| B (calendar) p.18     |                    |                   | B (book) p.31     |
| B (book) p.75         |                    |                   | B (book) p.48     |
| C (sardine tin) p.76  |                    |                   | B (book) p.87     |
| B ("plaque de fonte") |                    |                   | B (book) p.103    |
| p.86                  |                    |                   | B (newspaper)     |
| B (Boudin) p.93       |                    |                   | p.145             |
| B (book) p.95         |                    |                   |                   |
| B ("gravure") p.99    |                    |                   |                   |
| C ("plaque de fonte") |                    |                   |                   |
| p.160                 |                    |                   |                   |
| C (newspaper) p.167   |                    |                   |                   |
| C ("illustration")    |                    |                   |                   |
| p.170                 |                    |                   |                   |
| C (picture) p.178     |                    |                   |                   |
| C (spatial) p.181     |                    |                   |                   |

Figure 0 reveals that apart from the newspaper "mise en abyme" which links all three narrative sequences in a contradictory system of narrative framings (A appears as a newspaper item in C (p.167) which appears as a newspaper item in B (p.145) which appears as a newspaper item in A (p.181)), and also that apart from the "mise en abyme" of the "Leçons de choses" textbook which frames J within B, all the other "captures" are of sequence A framed either by sequence B or sequence C. Thus, merely from a statistical point of view, the narrative conflict in Leçon de choses may be described as the struggle between B and C for the supremacy over A. A detailed look at the first main chapter in the novel, "Expansion", will reveal the role played by fictional "mises en abyme" in this conflict.

We have already seen that sequence A is split into two time spans each of which progresses independently of the other in the text. A close look at the start of the chapter will show how this split is brought about by the influence of sequence B. Although we have already noted that the "promeneuses" sequence stems from the description of the painting at the start of the chapter, this painting is not itself explicitly framed in either sequence B or C; consequently a *general* sense of frame ambiguity haunts the beginning of the chapter and the first appearance of sequence A. The chapter begins with the description of a seascape painting which is "punaisée à côté de la fenêtre dont l'embrasure encadre un paysage champêtre" (p.15). The description of the view outside the window appears to include, gradually, the presence of the "promeneuses", that is sequence A:

Trois femmes au teint sans doute fragile qu'elles  
protègent du soleil par des ombrelles descendent la  
pente du verger. (p.16)

This perspective seems to be contradicted, however, by the appearance of

sequence B which describes the soldiers looking out of a window onto a "paysage où rien ne bouge, ni un animal, ni une forme humaine, ni un véhicule quelconque" (p.17). With this new perspective, sequence A (or the description of the women) is shifted to a different frame: no longer are the women seen through the window but they are now framed in the calendar illustration hanging on the wall of the room occupied by the soldiers:

Entouré sur le calendrier par les colonnes de  
noms de saints ou de martyrs, le groupe  
insouciant des promeneuses continuent à dévaler  
le coteau. (p.18)

Thus, although, as Jost correctly notes,<sup>24</sup> sequence A stems textually from the metaphorical language of the description of the wall-paper in "Générique", its initial narrative framing is highly ambiguous. Where does the window through which the women can be seen belong? It is not part of sequence B since we are told that the view from that window contains complete stillness and absence of all human life. A possible explanation is that the window is in the room which the builders are renovating in sequence C. This framing is totally implicit since there is no reference to the workers at this point in the novel. However, it may be supported by the entry of the same group of women into the farm-house in the workers' absence at the end of the novel in "Court-Circuits". Since the reader can only arrive at this interpretation when he has reached the end of the novel, it seems fair to claim that the deep sense of ambiguity surrounding the initial appearance of sequence A is overwhelming. But if we do, at a second reading, "situate" the window through which the "promeneuses" can be seen in the house being renovated by the builders (that is, in sequence C), we will begin to grasp the rivalry between sequences B and C for the domination of A. Within the first few pages of the novel, A is framed alternately with C and B.

Jost's "topographical analysis" of "Expansion" correctly identifies the central "mise en abyme", the description of the cigar box, as the pivot in the textual development of the chapter. However, his account of the motivation of the textual activity is unsatisfactory. There are two main points in Jost's argument. Firstly, in his analysis, the choice facing the "promeneuses" in sequence A of whether to take the farm or the cliff route on their way back acts as a "plaque tournante structurelle" in the transformations which are produced between the start and the end of the chapter:

Les femmes discutent entre elles sur le chemin  
que l'on suivra au retour en se demandant si on  
prendra par la ferme ou par la falaise. (p.31)

The sentence is immediately followed by the first instance of sequence A2 which Jost identifies as "le côté de la ferme".<sup>25</sup> The description of the little girl's eyelids ("deux minces croissants comme des parenthèses horizontales" (p.32) ) are, for Jost, an implicit recall of the description of the seascape painting ("en forme de virgules ou de minuscules croissants" (p.15)) which the critic identifies as "le côté de la falaise". The critic interprets the development of the text as follows:

La réitération de quelques vocables contribue  
donc à former une chaîne structurelle ainsi  
constituée: description de la falaise -  
description de l'enfant et début de l'itinéraire  
de la femme - arrivé de la femme à la falaise.  
Le rapprochement scriptural de l'enfant et de  
la falaise concourt à diriger la fiction vers  
un autre lieu; la contiguïté contextuelle de  
son côté fournit les éléments mis en jeu par  
la structure de la fin du chapitre. 26

Thus, the journey made by the mother to the "rendez-vous" with her is the circular journey made by the fiction returning to its point of departure: "la falaise". Jost's interpretation is unconvincing mainly

because there is no direct mention of the fact that the lovers' "rendez-vous" is on the cliff, indeed it is by the "barreau" on the edge of the wood that they meet.

The second point in Jost's analysis is that the description of the cigar box immediately following the woman's departure to meet her lover provides a clue to the structure of the end of the chapter. Jost notices that the description produces a textual exchange between the man in sequence A and the "pourvoyeur" in sequence B. The description of the cigar box in sequence B (p.33) at the centre of the chapter <sup>27</sup> is immediately followed by a description of sequence A in which the man's legs are "écartées en V" (p.34). At the end of the chapter, the description of the woman's arrival at her "rendez-vous" in sequence A where her lover awaits focusses on the cigar being smoked by the man <sup>28</sup> and is directly followed by a description of the "pourvoyeur" in sequence B whose legs are "écartées et à demi repliées" (p.53):

Les deux hommes, du fait de la proximité contextuelle antécédente de la description de la boîte à cigares et du goûter dans l'herbe, ont donc échangé leurs caractères distinctifs. L'évolution diégétique n'est en conséquence que la résultante d'un enchaînement textuel de signifiants fort éloignés (à la différence de ce qui se passait dans Triptyque où elle était l'effet d'une description éparse.) <sup>29</sup>

There are two errors in Jost's methodology. Firstly, his decision to situate the analysis outside of the context of intersequential activity inevitably introduces large gaps in his account of the textual associations and transformations in the novel. Secondly, his criticism and dismissal of the Ricardolian "linear" reading leads him away from the development of the narrative conflict surrounding the framing of sequence A.

As we have seen, a linear reading of the start of "Expansion" outlines sequence A as an ambiguous narrative sequence which is alternately

framed within sequence B and sequence C. This rival influence continues throughout the whole novel but in "Expansion" it is sequence B which gains the upper hand. The "promeneuses"'s decision to take the "falaise" route is structurally significant not for the reasons which Jost gives but because it initials a shift or internal break within the narrative sequence, the production of sequence A2 occurs under the influence of sequence B since "falaise" is an element which first appears in sequence B in the "Leçons de choses" textbook being read by the "tircur":

Fig.20. Roches à découvert sur le bord de la mer.  
Un phare se dresse au sommet d'une haute falaise  
aux parois noires, battue par des vagues grises.<sub>30</sub> (pp.23-4)

The fact that the first instance of sequence A2 is separated from the reference to "falaise" in sequence A1 only by another extract from the same book (this time the passage deals with the function of wall-paper) confirms the implicit presence or influence of sequence B in the textual motivation of the production of sequence A2. The influence takes the form of a repetition of motifs: mainly the colour black the motif of writing or drawing. "Figure 13" preceding the first instance of sequence A2 is a "mise en abyme" of sequence C since its title is "Ouvriers collant du papier sur les murs d'une chambre". The passage stresses the whiteness of the wall-paper and the "dessins" which cover it. We already know that the drawings are of flowers (p.10) which are later specified as "coquelicots" (p.93). Consequently, when the little girl's hair in the first instance of sequence A2 is described in terms of paintstrokes, the reader begins to note the association being made under the influence of sequence B between sequence A2 and the motif of writing:

Les cheveux, les plis du drap, le rebord du lit  
dessinent des ombres noires, estompées, comme  
de larges coups de pinceau sur un fond d'aquarelle  
où leurs contours se dissolvent. (p.32)

The "mise en abyme" of the cigar box, which is itself framed in sequence B,<sup>31</sup> following directly after the first instance of sequence A2, confirms this association by singling out the relevant elements in the former segment:

Le mot CLARO est peint au pochoir, de biais et  
à l'encre noire sur la planchette qui forme le  
fond de la boîte, striée de veines fines comme  
des cheveux. (p.33)

Jost's identification of the resemblance between the figure of the "cavalier" on the cigar box and the man in sequence A can now be seen in a wider context of textual association. More precisely, it is an example of the dominance of sequence B over sequence A. This domination is also strongly felt at the end of the chapter when the woman first sees her lover by the light of the burning end of the cigar he is smoking.

Thus we can conclude that, in "Expansion", three "mises en abyme" govern the domination of sequence B over sequence A: firstly, the "promeneuse"'s walk is framed by the picture on the calendar hanging on the wall in sequence B (p.18); secondly, the extract from "Leçons de choses" in sequence B provides the original base from which certain key elements in sequence A emerge, such as "falaise" and "voilier" (p.23); thirdly, the description of the cigar box provides a textual framing of certain motifs or dominant "signifiés" in sequence B which play an important role in the production of sequence A2, such as the colour black and the sexual symbol of the cigar.

In the second chapter (whose title "Leçon de choses" echoing the title of the whole novel stresses its centrality), sequence A2 is dominated by the influence of a "mise en abyme" which is this time situated in sequence C. Indeed, the chapter opens with a description of



one of the builders in sequence C eating a hard-boiled egg during his lunch break:

Tandis qu'il mastique sa main repose le pain puis saisit une petite salière avec laquelle il saupoudre la partie restante de l'oeuf. Le jaune forme un disque parfait, légèrement verdâtre sur les bords. Il s'effrite chaque fois sous l'action des dents, présentant une surface irrégulière, alors qu'elles coupent de façon nette l'anneau blanc à consistance élastique qui l'entoure. (p.73)

At the centre of the chapter, an instance of sequence A2 is clearly influenced by the above description:

Sans cesser de fouiller de sa langue la bouche mouillée de nouveau collée à la sienne, l'homme pétrit la boule tiède et gonflée. Il serre et deserre sa main ou frôle de la paume le mamelon élastique. Il s'écarte. Elle enfouit de nouveau sa tête dans son épaule. Sans cesser de la caresser, il regarde la coulée de chair laiteuse aux contours imprécis dans l'obscurité, marquée d'une lune sombre par la large auréole. Il se penche brusquement et l'engloutit dans sa bouche.

One can discern an implicit association between the woman's breast and the builder's egg. This association is based on similarity of texture ("mamelon élastique", "consistance élastique"), on similarity of shape (the breast is described as a "boule tiède et gonflée") on similarity of colour ("chair laiteuse") and on the fact that the lover in sequence A2 devours the woman's breast ("l'engloutit de sa bouche") thus echoing the builder in sequence C who is eating a hard-boiled egg. Since the description of the episode in sequence C appears some pages before the episode in sequence A2, one can conclude that the latter is influenced by the former. This domination, however, is inverted at the end of the chapter where an instance of sequence C is influenced by sequence A2. Just as in "Expansion", where a

narrative transformation occurs within sequence A (in other words, the birth of sequence A2) brought about mainly by sequence B, so too in "Leçons de choses" another narrative transformation takes place. This time the transformation occurs within sequence C and the active agent is, conversely, sequence A2:

Le verger, le pont avec son amoncellement hérissé ainsi que le chemin se fondent dans l'ombre. Cependant la trace de celui-ci se divine encore aux taches blanches (journaux, linces?) que l'on distingue dans le crépuscule, éparpillé sur ses bords. Cette fois le sourd fracas de l'éboulement secoue la maison toute entière. Il est encore suivi pendant quelques instants par les bruits des chutes de quelques pierres ou de quelques briques, puis le silence se fait. Les coups de masses ont cessé de retentir. Pendant un moment le silence est complet jusqu'à ce que la voix du jeune maçon se fasse entendre, appelant à l'aide, à l'intérieur de la maison d'abord, puis dehors. (p.114)

The first two sentences belong to sequence B since they describe the view out of the window of the room occupied by the soldiers. The reference to "taches blanches", however, heralds the transformation that will take place in sequence C: the collapse of the roof over the *builders'* heads. The "signifié" "taches blanches" indicates the association between this passage and the two which we have just been looking at. Furthermore, the word chosen to refer to the collapse is "éboulement" which reveals the presence of sequence A2 within the description by virtue of the fact that the word contains the "signifiant" "boule" which referred to the woman's breast. Another metaphorical hinge of association or dominant "signifié" operating in this context is the word "chute" linking the collapse of the house with the moral fall of the adulterous woman. As Simon himself has stated:

arrivé presque à la fin de la rédaction de mon brouillon, je me suis rendu compte, en feuilletant

je ne sais plus pour quelle raison le littérateur, qu'en fait je n'avais fait que développer toutes les connotations du mot "chute": chute de plâtras, chute d'un pan de falaise, d'une corniche, d'un obus (point de ...), chute de cheval, chute du jour, chute (probable) d'un point fortifié, chute d'une femme, chute des reins, etc. 32

The narrative transformation at this point of sequence C is similar to the transformation within sequence A in "Expansion" in so far as a chronological break is produced in the narrative. But unlike what happens in the first chapter, there is no "dédoublement" of the narrative sequence. Since none of the following instances of sequence C show any signs of developing this new turn of events. The builders eventually leave the house normally at the end of the day. It is impossible to say whether or not this contradiction is due to the fact that the remaining instances of sequence C shift to a point in time prior to the collapse of the room. Such an interpretation would situate the final instance of sequence C (p.70), in which the builders go home at the end of an uneventful day, on the eve of the accident. However, such a reductive interpretation is unconvincing given the network of contradictions underlying the novel. Instead of looking for explanations on the level of plot, the reader is encouraged to interpret the text within the framework of its compositional structure. The structural reading of the relationship between the three passages which we have been looking at (sequence C: builder eating egg; sequence A2: lovers embracing; sequence C: house collapsing) is powerfully and explicitly confirmed in the "mise en abyme" description of the egg at the start of the third main chapter "La Charge de Reichshoffen":

Le jeune maçon frappe à petits coups la coquille d'un oeuf dur contre un angle de la plus haute des briques qu'il a empilées en guise de table. Sec

mouvements s'accompagnent d'un faible bruit de calcaire écrasé. (p.135)

Already one can see that the writing associates the eating of the egg with the crumbling of the house:

Lorsqu'elle est suffisamment fendillée, il arrache avec l'ongle du pouce les fragments de la coquille dont certains se détachent par larges plaques concaves, d'autres en menus éclats que maintient assemblés une fine ~~membrane~~ élastique. Les débris de coquille tombent sur la page de journal déchirée qui lui sert de nappe, quelquefois à l'envers, forment ailleurs de petites coupoles apertures aux bords dentelés, d'un rose saumon pâle semé par endroits de points roux. (p.136)

The "coquilles" denote the influence of sequence A through its evocation of poppies both paronomastically (repetition of "coq" in "coquilles" and "coquelicots") and metaphorically (the shells are spattered with red spots). More specifically, the lines pick out the reference to the "taches blanches (journeur, linges)" which signals the collapse of the house: the eggshells fall onto "la page de journal déchirée qui lui sert de nappe". The significance of the motif of whiteness in sequence C is thus shown to be related to the whiteness of the page. We will shortly see that the element of "linge" reappears at the end of "La charge de Reichshoffen" acting as another link in the chain of association between sequences A2 and C.

La surface lisse de l'oeuf brille d'un éclat bleuté et reflète le rectangle de la fenêtre étiré en longueur et arrondi sur son flanc bombé. En fait, à un degré moindre de lecture, invisible mais cependant présente sur la courbure polie, l'image virtuelle de la pièce (plafonds, murs, sol) vient se rassembler, englobant les gravats, les outils, les échafaudages et les deux occupants dans une sorte de microcosme ovulaire dont le centre condenserait l'univers tout entier. (p.136)

The description of the "mise en abyme" as a "microcosme ovulaire" is the culminating point of the "rapprochement" which has been repeatedly

stressed between sequences B and C. The reader is thus presented with a few key textual elements which are active in the preceding chapter, "Leçons de choses", and he is being urged to turn to the earlier pages and "cross-read", and thus play an active role in the production of textual signification. The "mise en abyme" does not only revert the reader to the earlier pages but it also links up with the linear development of the text reflecting the narrative segment which immediately follows. The "mise en abyme" produces a transformation in the narrative framing in that the "rapprochement" it has underlined between the two sequences is immediately made concrete by a spatial shift which places the two fictional isotopies in narrative contact. The two lovers are no longer by the edge of the wood but in the room which the two builders have been decorating:

Il cherche à la renverser sur le côté. Les  
tréteaux de l'échafaudage grincent à chacun de  
leurs mouvements. (p.137)

In "La Charge de Reichshoffen", sequence A2 produces the same sort of short-lived transformation in sequence E as the one it produced in sequence C in "Leçons de choses". Once again the shift is brought about on the level of plot. The narrative sequence returns to the same description of the shells falling which appeared in the first instance of this narrative sequence. However, the repetition reveals subtle but significant changes. We may call the re-description of the sequence "B2" and the "original version" "B1". In fact, one may say that the first instance of B2 provides an explanation of the first instance of B1, since it is the "tireur"'s impulsive action of firing at the German "side-car" which causes the shelling. The main difference, however, is that in B1 it is the sergeant who enters the room while in B2 it is the lieutenant. Furthermore, while sequence B1

influences sequence A2, as we saw in connection with the narrative structure of "Expansion", sequence B2, on the other hand, is influenced by sequence A2. Once again we find that Jost's distinction between the linear process of generation and the structural topography of the text is unsatisfactory. The appearance of the instance of sequence B2 in which the shelling is re-presented is produced by the same associative play in the word "boule" as was noted earlier. The couple in sequence A2 have just finished making love and the adulteress is upset at the thought of becoming pregnant:

les sanglots l'étouffent. Il lui tapotent gauchement l'épaule, porte à sa bouche le mince cigare qu'il tient entre deux doigts, se ravise et l'éloigne de ses lèvres sans l'allumer [...] Elle dit vous m'aviez promis vous m'aviez promis que vous feriez attention. Il dit allons. Elle laisse retomber sa jupe. Elle tient le morceau de tissu trempé et pluant roulé en boule de sa main. Elle a un geste comme pour le jeter puis se ravise [...] On n'entend que les faibles bruits de sanglots qui s'échappent de la gorge du pourvoyeur, comme des cris de souris ou un rat qui couine. Le tireur continue à aspirer de lentes bouffées de son cigare dont chaque fois la faible lueur croissant et décroissant extrait de l'ombre son visage qui se fond de nouveau dans l'obscurité. Brusquement, sans qu'aucun bruit ni aucun mouvement visible l'ait annoncé, le chuintement rapide d'une fusée tirée de derrière ou de l'intérieur du petit bois déchire le silence. Le bruit soyeux de l'air froissé s'intensifie et décroît rapidement tandis que le sillage d'étincelles s'élève en ondulant dans le ciel noir. Arrivée très haut, en bout de course, la tête de la fusée éclate, éparpillant autour d'elle une pluie de brandons. (p.169)

The "signifiant" "boule" linking back to the "eboulement" of the house in sequence C sets off the description of the fall of shells in sequence B. Moreover, the influence of sequence A2 extends over the whole passage: the "pourvoyeur"'s sobe echo those of the adulteress; the "tireur"'s cigar matches the adulterer's; the sound of the shells flying "le bruit soyeux de l'air froissé" echoes the sound of the ripped clothing in sequence A2 (p.140); the word "chuintement" is also used to

refer to the sound made by the woman in the throes of love-making (p.140); and finally, the description of the explosion in the last sentence resembles that of an ejaculation. It is because of the textual influence of A2 over B2 that the "seeds" of the possibility of development of B2, presented in the "mise en abyme" of the newspaper item, are framed in sequence A.

Thus the pervasive influence which sequence A2 casts over sequence B2 in "La Charge de Reichshoffen" reaches a climax in the final instance of sequence B in which the soldiers' hold-out is showered with bombs. But the *dominance* which sequence B experiences under A2 is not of the same structural importance as the inverse relationship which we saw in "Expansion". Despite the variations (such as the substitution of the lieutenant for the sergeant) and the break in the chronological sequence and the subsequent redistribution of fictional elements, the structural effect is not of the same depth. The reason for this is that B1 and B2 never cross one another. Their relationship is purely substitutive since B1 never appears in "La Charge de Reichshoffen". Consequently the "dédoublément" of sequence B does not affect the metonymic chain of the text and for that reason is less troubling than the "dédoublément" of sequence A. Another important reason for the relative weakness of the domination of sequence A2 over sequence B is that the latter is never framed in the former. Apart from the newspaper item, sequence A2 contains no "mise en abyme" of sequence B whereas, as we saw earlier, the latter offers several of the former. Thus, in terms of sequential conflict, the "mise en abyme" frame or "capture" is structurally more disruptive than "descriptive influence".

Sometimes there is a simultaneous domination of the same narrative sequence by the two others, although the one dominates by the use of

"capture" and the other by "descriptive influence". Thus at the centre of the novel in the second chapter, the "plaque de fonte" containing the word "FRULING" is framed in sequence B (p.86): it is the "pourvoyeur" who is examining it. The engraving on the "plaque" is, of course, a "mise en abyme" of sequence A2, as indicated by the figure of the woman "à la jupe bouffante" and the references to "balustrade", "terrasse" and "oiseau". The description, however, is under the influence of sequence C in the following ways: firstly, the passage is immediately preceded by an instance of sequence C in which the builder examines the cut on his thumb under the light. This is repeated in the description of the "pourvoyeur" examining the "plaque" in the light of his cigarette lighter. Secondly, the presence of sequence C can be perceived in the "caisse de la dernière couvée éclosée dont les poussins échappés s'égaillent sur le carrelage". One can perceive a metaphorical repetition between the reference to the newly hatched chicks and the egg which the builder eats for his lunch in sequence C. Lastly, the passage is immediately followed by a reference to sequence C through an extract of "Leçons de choses" (p.87).

When the same "mise en abyme" reappears near the end of "La Charge de Reichshoffen", the roles are reversed. The passage is infiltrated with elements from sequence B such as the dominance of the colour "black", the references to "pétales bombés", "nuages" and this influence is confirmed by the fact that the *description* is immediately followed by an instance of sequence B. The "plaque" on the other hand is framed within sequence C (pp.160-2):

Les maçons ont déposé la plaque de fonte qui garnissait le foyer de l'ancienne cheminée, maintenant à moitié démolie, et l'ont appuyée contre le pied du mur parmi les décombres (p.160)



Its function as "mise en abyme" of sequence A is still evident. There is the same indirect association through the "mise en abyme" of the cigar box as in the references to "balustrade", "terrasse", "baldachin". Moreover, the writing reinforces the "capture" by reworking the description of the love scene in an earlier instance of sequence A2. A description of the man's movements is reworked into a description of the engraving:

Son bassin avance et recule en même temps  
qu'il est animé d'un mouvement de bas en haut,  
à la façon d'un cavalier se laissant aller  
souplement sur sa selle pour accompagner la  
houle d'un cheval au galop. (p.155)

À gauche, la balustrade s'interrompt et on  
peut voir à l'arrière-plan les côtés d'un  
rectangle en perspective cavalière, un  
bassin sans doute dans le parc qui s'étend  
au-delà. (p.161)

The reworking of "cavalière" and "bassin" produces an association between the two passages. What is interesting to note is that the textual associations are produced through a perspective of double "mise en abyme". The "mise en abyme" of the "plaque de fonte" reflects sequence A2 by referring to the "mise en abyme" of the cigar box through some of the latter's prominent features ("cavalière", "balustrade"). "Mises en abyme" can thus be seen to be playing a vital part in the tissue of intersequential conflict.

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#### 4. Metaphors of the conflict: writing and sexuality.

The intersequential conflict of leçon de choses may be defined as the alternate domination of sequences C and B over sequence A, the outcome of which is the production of sequence A2. The latter in turn imposes its influence over the first two sequences although the

transformations incurred here are less fundamental. As we saw, one of the most striking methods of domination is through the use of the "signifiant" of colour. The influence of sequence B1 over sequence A2 can be seen mainly through the repetition of the colour "black" which is one of the elements in the cigar box "mise en abyme" in sequence B1, as in "galon noir" and the print on the lid of the box:

Le mot CLARO est peint au pochoir, de biais  
et à l'encre noire [p.33]

The colour "black" infiltrates sequence A2 mainly in the references to the man waiting for the woman who first spots him by the cigar he is smoking:

Il se détache de la barrière et s'avance vers  
elle, noir dans le noir, précédé de la tache  
rouge du cigare qui semble suspendue dans la  
nuit. (p.52)

Blackness seems to spread throughout the sequence:

Les voix noires des petites grenouilles se  
font assourdissantes [...] Tout est noir.  
Au-dessus d'elle elle ne voit plus que son  
visage sans forme, noir. L'odeur noire du  
cigare est plus forte que celle des prés  
humides. (p.100)

The influence of sequence C over sequence A2 is, as has been noted, achieved through the incursion of the colour "white" in the descriptions of the woman. The "mise en abyme" of the builder's egg influences the description of the woman whose "cou blanc" and "chair laiteuse" contrast with the repetition of the colour "black" in the references to her lover. Thus, white is associated with the woman and black with the man in their sexual confrontation. The sexual undertones of the black/white conflict is stressed by the fact that at the moment of climax the man's sperm is described as black:

À l'intérieur de la chair obscure le long membre  
raidit se tend encore lâchant de longues grilles

de sperme noir / (p.163)

Furthermore, as was noted earlier, there is a link between the break-up of the sexual encounter and the reference to the "taches blanches (journaux, linges?)" which preceded the shelling of the house in sequence C. Dreading the possibility of becoming pregnant, the woman attempts to clean herself of the sperm with a piece of torn linen "roulé en boule dans sa main" (p.169). "Boule" links up with the reference to the woman's breast in the preceding chapter, at an earlier instance of sequence A2 ("l'homme pétrit la boule titde et gonflée" (p.101)) which we saw to be fundamentally dominated by sequence C. Furthermore, when she throws herself round his neck in a moment of desperate hope that everything will turn out well, the man expresses concern about being stained by the coiled piece of cloth:

Attention ma chérie vous allez me tacher. Elle dit vous t... Il se dégage doucement du bras qui enserre ses épaules et dont la main tient la boule de tissu gluant. Il dit mais bien sûr ma chérie bien sûr. Elle regarde sa main serrée sur l'étoffe froissée et mouillée. Elle répète vous tach. Il dit voyons ma chérie. Elle crie vous tacher espèce de. Il dit voyons ne criez pas on pourrait vous ent. Elle crie espèce de espèce de. Elle tourne brusquement le dos et part en courant. (p.172)

The reference to the "boule de tissu" and the repetition of the "signifiant" "tacher" stress the relationship between this passage and the instance of sequence C at the end of the previous chapter, where the "chute" of the house is heralded by the reference to the "taches blanches (journaux, linges?)" (p.114). Thus, white is associated with the woman and black with the man in sequence A2. Apart from (or rather associated with) the sexual connotations of the opposition between white and black, another metaphor of the inter-

sequential conflict can be extracted from the play of textual associations. Once again the metaphorical signification is produced as a result of the intersequential conflict in which sequences B and C alternately dominate over sequence A. The oft repeated motif of the visual quality of punctuation marks makes its first appearance (aside from "Générique") in the description of the painting at the start of "Expansion":

les flots verdâtres, les rochers violets, l'écume, le ciel bas, sont figurés indifféremment au moyen de petits coups de pinceau en forme de virgules ou de minuscules croissants. (p.15)

The motif reappears in sequence A2 in the description of the little girl's eyelids:

les bords des paupières fermées dessinent deux minces croissants, comme des parenthèses horizontales, au-dessus des joues riches. (p.32)

The same motif can also be found in the description of the woman's bare breasts in the opening lines of the third chapter of the novel:

Elle est maintenant toute dépeçtrillée, les deux seins tachés de sombre soulignés par deux ombres estompées en forme de croissants ou de parenthèses horizontales, d'un noir bleuté aussi.

If we "dismantle" the motif into two components, the black ink of the writing and the white page on which it is inscribed, we will be able to discern the rival activity of sequences B and C sparring for the domination of sequence A2. The motif of black ink is propagated by sequence B, as in the cigar box description:

Le mot CLARO est peint au pochoir, de blanc est à l'encre noire sur la planchette [p.33]

The motif of the white page is propagated by sequence C, as in the "mise en abyme" of the "Leçons de choses" textbook where the workers

are putting up white wall-paper (p.31).

The associations which can thus be created between sequence B, masculinity and black ink on the one hand, and sequence C, femininity and the white page on the other permit the reader to interpret the moment of ejaculation in sequence A2 in which reference is made to the "longues giclées de sperme noir" (p.163) as the scene of copulation or confrontation between sequences B and C.

The temptation to interpret the novel simply on its metaphorical connotations and to ignore the framework of narrative conflict on which these significations are built (in other words the temptation to interpret these connotations as themes: to see Leçon de choses as a novel about the conflict of sexes) might be overwhelming if it were not for the fact that the text presents an insurmountable obstacle. The "mise en abyme" of the tattoo on the builder's arm provides an inversion of the description of the woman's breasts, "tachés de sombre soulignés par deux ombres estompées en forme de croissants ou de parenthèses horizontales, d'un noir bleuté aussi" at the start of "La Charge de Reichshoffen":

Sur son bras à la peau laiteuse est dessiné un tatouage d'un bleu délavé, devenu à peine lisible, et où l'on devine, naïvement figuré, le corps d'une sirène [...] Deux parenthèses couchées, comme deux cupules, soulignant chacune un point, figurent les seins. Au-dessous de la sirène clapotent trois courtes rangées d'accents circonflexes alignés [...] (p.156)

The roles here are reversed: it is masculinity (in the form of the builder's arm) which is associated with the motif of the white page ("peau laiteuse") and femininity (the "sirène", a mirror image of the woman in sequence A2 as indicated by the repetition of the "parenthèses couchées"/"parenthèses horizontales") which is associated with the motif of the ink of writing ("tatouage d'un bleu délavé"). The "mise

en abyme" thus plays a vital part in checking any temptation the reader may have of wandering away from the text.

The function of "mise en abyme" in Leçon de choses as a whole is to remind us that any metaphorical reading of the novel (in other words any interpretation) must depend wholly on a literal reading of the text. If no synthesis is possible in a reading of the intersequential conflict, what, if any, is the basic framework of the text? The answer must be that this framework is the conflict itself, reflected in the description of the rhythmic movement of the lighthouse beam:

[elle] reparait deux fois coup sur coup,  
démascuée et occultée tour à tour selon un  
rythme codé avec une régularité de métronome [.] (p.17)

The focus of this movement is the focus on forme itself: the dividing-line between different fictional isotopies and between different narrative sequences. The lighthouse beam seems to be responding to some signal from the stars urging it to mark "l'instant, la seconde précise de la séparation du jour et de la nuit" (p.17).

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Conclusion.

The value of the four concepts around which we have based our study of Simon's later novels lies in the fact that they break away from the traditional, "descriptive" perspective of literary criticism and contribute to a general analysis of the process of reading fiction.

Application of the concepts has shown that the most striking feature in Claude Simon's later work is the predominance of conflict on several different levels. We have defined this conflict as the process of "frame breaks". Thus, in La Route des Flandres, Le Palace, and Histoire, the narrative framework is broken by the "éclats de narration" or series of "frame shifts" resulting in an intermingling of spatio-temporal settings. In La Bataille de Pharsale, the structure of intertextual "emboîtement" produced an overlapping of textual associations which tore down the traditionally insurmountable barriers surrounding each separate work. The repeated play of "frame transgression" in Les Corps conducteurs produced a heterogeneous combination of disconnected descriptions which we called "descriptive confusions" and which were mirrored by such depictions as that of the butterfly emerging out of the photograph.<sup>1</sup> The self-reflexive system of intersequential "frame conflict" in which each of the three narrative sequences in both Triptyque and Leçon de choses was seen to be englobed by another is best described in the following lines by Ricardou:

Agencement comparable à une bouteille de  
Klein où l'intérieur parvient à englober  
son extérieur; paradoxes topographiques  
par lesquels s'efface, nous le savons,  
toute prétention à la hiérarchie.<sup>2</sup>

"Frame within frame", "frame shift", "frame transgression", "frame

conflict": Simon's writing repeatedly subverts the notion of "unity" cherished by Aristotelian poetics. In typically flamboyant fashion, Salvador Dali has proclaimed "discontinuity" as the most fundamental feature of modernity:

La découverte la plus transcendente de notre époque est celle de la physique nucléaire sur la constitution de la matière. La matière est discontinue et toute expérience valable dans la peinture moderne ne peut et ne doit partir que d'une seule idée aussi concrète que significative: la discontinuité de la matière. 3

Complementing the disjunctive nature of the composition of Simon's novels is the associative act of reading them. The author has himself referred to this complementarity in phenomenological terms. The analogy with phenomenology here differs radically from the phenomenological analyses mentioned throughout the thesis in which writing was supposed to be an act of "pure description" of external reality. Instead, Simon defines fictional writing as a process of "mise en question" (the technical term is "epoché"). It is up to the reader to engage in the production of the polysemic associations of the text:

L'écrivain dit le monde et les choses (ou plutôt un monde et des choses): il ne les explique pas. L'aboutissement de son travail est essentiellement une mise en question. Au lecteur d'effectuer cet autre travail complémentaire qu'est la lecture. Il est partie prenante dans l'affaire (que serait un livre sans aucun lecteur?) Il n'existe pas d'objet sans sujet. 4

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Notes to Introduction.

1. Tzvetan Todorov Poétique Paris (Seuil) 1966, p.25.
  2. Tzvetan Todorov Littérature et signification Paris (Larousse) 1967, p.8.
  3. Jonathan Culler Structuralist Poetics London (Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1975, p.138.
  4. Claude Simon interview with Claud DuVerlie, Sub-stance, no.8, (Winter 1974), p.17.
  5. Ibid p.19.
  6. Une étape sûrement importante dans la voie vers la description de l'ensemble de la culture en termes d'un seul et même langage d'analyse sémiotique est la description, selon ce langage, ~~des propriétés~~ des textes artistiques exprimés dans différentes substances sémiotiques (littéraires, picturales, cinématographiques etc.) à l'aide de signes tant symboliques qu'iconiques. Il s'agit de la possibilité d'indiquer en termes de langage commun, propre à la description sémiotique, les homologues qui existent entre les "textes" relevant de différentes disciplines artistiques et qui justifient le classement des systèmes de signes artistiques dans une seule grande catégorie, distincte des autres par des aspects bien déterminés.  
  
Stefan Zolkiewski, 'Poétique de la composition', Semiotica, vol.5, no.3, (1972), p.210.
  7. Victor Carrabino The Phenomenological Level of Alain Robbe-Grillet Parma (Casa Editrice Maccari) 1974, pp.156-7.
  8. Jean Ricardou "'Claude Simon', textuellement" in Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (U.G.M.) 1975, p.12.
  9. Claude Simon, 'Un Homme traversé par le travail', La Nouvelle critique, no.105, (June-July 1977), p.33.
  10. Jean Ricardou "Esquisse d'une théorie des générateurs" in Positions et oppositions sur le roman contemporain Paris (Klincksieck) 1971, p.148.
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Notes to Part I Chapter One.

1. Iouri Lotman La Structure du texte artistique Paris (Gallimard) 1973, p.299.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid p.302.
4. Nouveau roman: Hier, aujourd'hui 2 vols Paris (U.G.E.) 1972, II 280  
Boris Uspensky makes a similar statement:

Here we might refer to G.K.Chesterton's remark that a landscape without a frame means almost nothing, but that it only requires the addition of some border (a frame, a window, an arch) to be perceived as a representation. In order to perceive the work of art as a sign system, it is necessary (although not always sufficient) to designate its borders: it is precisely these borders which create the representation. In many languages the meaning of the word "represent" is etymologically related to the meaning of the word "limit".

Boris Uspensky A Poetics of Composition London (University of California Press) 1973, p.140.

5. Ibid p.143.
6. For a discussion of this painting, see Lucien Dällenbach Le Récit spéculaire Paris (Seuil) 1977, pp.19-21.
7. Boris Uspensky op.cit. p.143.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid p.145.
10. Ibid p.156.
11. The concept of "foregrounding" has been defined in the following way:  
Foregrounding, as I understand it, is prominence that is motivated. It is not difficult to find patterns of prominence in a poem or prose text, regularities in the sounds or words or structures that stand out in some way, or may be brought out by careful reading; and one may often be led in this way towards a new insight, through finding that such prominence contributes to the writer's total meaning.  
M.A.K.Halliday "Linguistic function and literary style" in Literary Style: A Symposium edited by Seymour Chapman London (Oxford University Press) 1971, p.339.
12. Lotman op.cit. p.303.

Notes to Part I Chapter One.

13. Uspensky op.cit. p.146.

14. Ibid.

15. It is interesting to note the different reactions of the "real" editors of Adolphe to the "external frame" of that novel. Thus, for example, Gustave Hudler, editing the 1919 Manchester University Press edition, chose to place the title after the "Avis de l'Editeur" implying that the latter does not form an integral part of Constant's novel. An even more drastic decision was taken by the editor of the 1936 Librairie Grund (Paris) edition of the novel which only contains Adolphe's narrative: the "Avis de l'Editeur", "Lettre à l'Editeur", and "Réponse" being inexplicably suppressed.

16. See the chapter "L'Histoire dans l'histoire" in Jean Ricardou's Problèmes du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1967, pp.171-190.

17. The most famous reference to the "mise en abyme" quality of Hamlet's play is in a passage from Gide's 1893 Journal which is discussed by Dällenbach op.cit. pp.22-3.

18. As Victor Chklovski has noted in Sur la théorie de la prose Lausanne (Editions de l'Age d'Homme) 1973 pp.66-79, the technique of "embolage" is a feature which is common to a wide range of literary works: the Indian Panchatantra, the Persian Thousand and One Nights, and the European "romans d'aventures". In every case the technique is used as a "procédé de ralentissement" (p.66). In the extreme case of the Polish film "The Zaragosa Manuscript", entirely composed of a string of stories within stories, the process may be described as one of interruption since none of the narratives ever reaches its conclusion.

19. Uspensky op.cit. p.148 and pp.151-3.

20. la force de ces imparfaits de discours indirect consiste à exprimer la liaison entre le dehors et le dedans, à mettre sur le même plan, en usant du même temps, l'extérieur et l'intérieur, la réalité telle qu'elle se déroule dans les choses.

Albert Thibaudet Gustave Flaubert Paris (Gallimard) 1935, pp.246-7.

21. Uspensky pp.159-60.

22. Alain Robbe-Grillet Pour un nouveau roman Paris (Minuit) 1963, p.125 and p.126.

23. Michel Butor Ecrits sur le roman Paris (Gallimard) 1972, p.53.

24. Robbe-Grillet op.cit. p.126.

25. Erving Goffman Frame Analysis Harmondsworth (Penguin) 1974, pp.345-77.

26. Uspensky op.cit. p.139.

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27. Jorge-Luis Borges A Universal History of Infamy Harmondsworth (Penguin) 1975, p.119.

28. Ricardou op.cit. p.29. It is interesting to note that the shift of context in both Unamuno's and Borges's work is signalled by the motif of travel: Augusto Ierez travels to Salamanca to meet Unamuno; don Illán and the dean travel from Toledo to Rome. (The final words in the latter story also stress the irony of the dean's disillusionment when he is shown the door by the magician who wishes the dean "a safe journey home".) Michel Rutor has said that the theme of travel is a metaphorical expression of "cette distance entre le lieu de la lecture et celui où nous emmène le récit" op.cit. p.50. We may extend this interpretation by suggesting that the theme often reflects the transgression of the distance from one fictional context to another. Examples can be found in the train journey in Rutor's La Modification, and in the following examples from Simon's work: the journey to Barcelona in Le Palais, the trips to Greece in Histoire and la bataille de Pharsale, the plane journey in Les Corps conducteurs, and, less overtly, the soldiers on horseback in la Route des Flandres.

29. For a discussion of these paintings with reference to Simon's work, see *infra* p.29.

30. Claude Simon, 'Un homme traversé par le travail', interview in La Nouvelle critique, no.105, (June-July 1977), p.32.

31. Philippe Sollers 'Vers la notion de "Paradis"', Tel Quel, no.68, (winter 1976), p.103.

Notes to Part 1 Chapter Two.

1. Bernard Pingaud 'Sur la Route des Flandres', les Temps Modernes, vol.178, (February 1961), p.1030.
2. Boris Uspensky A Poetics of Composition London (University of California Press) 1973, pp.151-5.
3. Pingaud art.cit. p.1027.
4. For a discussion of the ideological and critical implications of Pingaud's position see L. Houdiez "La Critique pour ou contre le texte" in Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (U.G.E.) 1975, pp.45-7.
5. Dominique Lancelaux 'Modalités de la narration dans La route des Flandres', Poétique, no.14 (1973).
6. This is the basic difference separating La Route des Flandres from Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! which it closely resembles in many other ways.
7. Lancelaux art. cit. p.241.
8. This formal rivalry is mirrored in Corinne's aversion to Blum.
9. Blum's feminine features are matched by the "paysanne"'s "souliers d'homme pas lacés" (p.39).
10. Jean Ricardou Problèmes du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1967, p.53.
11. Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue française Paris (Presses Universitaires de France) 1975, p.564.
12. Stephen Heath The Nouveau Roman London (Edinburgh) 1972, pp.176-7.
13. Ricardou op.cit. p.48.
14. I.J.Gelb A Study of Writing London (The University of Chicago Press) 1969, p.7.
15. The circular trajectory of the narrative can be noted by the fact (amongst many others) that the novel opens and ends with the same episode (de Weizach's "suicide"), and also by the fact that the centre of the novel contains a description of the race-course in the shape of the figure eight which is immediately followed by a repetition of the "suicide" description.
16. Stephen Heath has rightly pointed to the relevance in this context of Derrida's discussion of Freud's example of the "Wunderblock" as "guardian" of memory traces. The Nouveau Roman, p.170
17. Jacques Derrida De la Grammatologie Paris (Minuit) 1967, p.158.
18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty La Phénoménologie de la perception Paris (Gallimard) 1945, p.124.

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19. Roland Barthes 'Eléments de sémiologie', Communications, no.4, (1964), p.124.
  20. Martinet uses "sentinelle" as an example in his discussion of "redundant gender" in A Functional View of Language Oxford (Clarendon Press) 1962, p.1.
  21. For a definition of "syntagmatic" and "paradigmatic" associations, see Roland Barthes op.cit. pp.114-30. Barthes offers four types of examples: in dress, the relationship between the different clothes worn at the same time by one person ( shirts, trousers, shoes) is syntagmatic, whereas the relationship between the shirt being worn at present and all the others in the wardrobe is paradigmatic; with food, the relationship between the different courses on the same menu is syntagmatic whereas the relationship between the different alternatives of "hors d'oeuvres", for instance, is paradigmatic; with furniture the relationship between the different pieces in the same room is syntagmatic whereas the relationship between the different styles of bed, for example, is paradigmatic; in architecture, the relationship between the different elements of the same building is syntagmatic whereas the relationship between different styles of rooftop, window, or balcony is paradigmatic. The former type of relationship is combinatory, based on association by contiguity or juxtaposition, and the latter type is substitutive based on association by similarity or opposition.
  22. One should note the appropriateness of the themes of eroticism and ancestry in the context of the opposition between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic poles of association. An ancestral relationship is a link with the past based on ties of "blood" and family name, while a sexual or marital relationship is a link with the present based on ties with a member of a different family. The distinction is made clearer in terms of heraldry where, as Bruce Morrissette shows, contrary to Gide's description, the escutcheon never contains an internal miniature replica of itself, but inserts a miniature of the escutcheon of the wife's family. Thus the heraldic origin of the "mise en abyme" is unfounded. See Bruce Morrissette 'Un Héritage d'André Gide: la duplication intérieure', Comparative Literature, vol. VIII no.2 (1971), p.128.  
The ancestral relationship is, in symbolic terms, paradigmatic. The themes in la Route des Mandres, therefore reflect the novel's compositional structure.
  23. Stephen Heath The Nouveau Roman, pp.154-5
  24. Another inset narrative is the story of the adulterous relations in the village (pp.59-69, 266-74) the significance of which is discussed by Stuart Sykes in "Mise en Abyme" in the Novels of Claude Simon", Forum for Modern Language Studies, vol.IX, no.4, (October 1973), p.337.
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Notes to Part I Chapter Three

1. Dominique Lanceraux 'Modalités de la narration dans Le Palace de Claude Simon', Littérature, no.16 (December 1974), p.6.
2. Ibid p.10.
3. The term "character" must be used here with caution especially with regard to the denomination of "le scripteur" which, despite the form of the word, does not necessarily have to be thought of as a character or in human terms but as the process of writing itself.
4. John Sturrock, introduction to Le Palace London (Methuen Educational Ltd) 1972, p.xxv
5. Le Palace marks a development from Le Sacre du Printemps. The two time spans concerning Bernard and his step-father are reformulated into the two time spans dealing with the protagonist's two visits to Barcelona in Le Palace.
6. Lanceraux art.cit. p.14.
7. Sturrock op.cit. p.xxiv. The critic admits to having earlier thought it was the student who committed suicide.
8. Anthony Fugh "Invitation à une lecture polyvalente" in Claude Simon : analyse, théorie Paris (U.G.E.) 1975, p.392.
9. Jakobson's term "shifter" or "embrayeur" refers to words such as "je", "tu", "maintenant", "ici", "demain" whose reference depends on the context in which they occur. As Emile Benveniste says:  
"je" ne peut être identifié que par l'instance  
du discours qui le contient et par lui seulement.  
Éléments de linguistique générale Paris (Gallimard) 1963, p.252.  
The reader or listener therefore needs to be aware of the context in which the word is "framed" in order to know who or what it is referring to. This dependence on frame explains why "shifters" are so prominent in the vast majority of "nouveaux romans" (above all in those written by Robbe-Grillet) which focus on frame play. We shall see several examples, in the course of this thesis, of passages from Simon where the apparent assuredness expressed by a word such as "maintenant" thinly veils a fundamental ambiguity of reference.
10. It is possible to apply a more radical reading of this passage by interpreting the "je" in this instance as the voice of uncle Charles himself and not the narrator who has momentarily taken the place of uncle Charles. In this case the "dédoublement" would be complete: the same "signifiant" "je" would be referring, at different moments of the text, to two different "signifiés". An opposite example can be found in Buñuel's film entitled "Cet obscur objet du désir" where the same character is alternately played by two different actresses. Here it is the "signifié" which remains constant while two different "signifiants" (the two actresses) are



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employed. However, Carlos Saura's "Elisa vida mía" provides a better parallel with Histoire. Here a disjunctive effect is produced by the fact that this film is narrated by Elisa's father who is writing her autobiography. Thus although the film is narrated by Elisa (it is she who is speaking), the voice that we hear (the voice which is speaking) is her father's. A shift of frame can be discerned in that the father assumes Elisa's identity in the same way as the narrator of Histoire assumes the identity of uncle Charles.

11. C.-G. Bjurström "Dimensions du temps chez Claude Simon" in Entretiens Montpellier (Éditions Subervie) 1972, p.141.

12. Sans doute lui pouvoit-il voir cela: c'est-à-dire comme sur ces photos des méthodes d'éducation physique, comme si cet obturateur n'avait pas cessé de s'ouvrir et de se refermer pendant tout ce temps. (p.295)

Although Muybridge is not directly evoked, one can see that his photographs would have the same fascination for Simon as they do for Francis Bacon. The links between Simon and Bacon reach a climax in Triptyque but are also visible in the earlier novels.

13. Claude Simon interview in Entretiens, p.17.

14. This ironical reference to visual precision is matched, in Le lalace, by the student's pursuit of certainty and precision in the evocation of the past which is shown to be futile compared with the Italian's more fatalistic attitude. Thus, for example, the student interrupts the Italian's narration of the assassination in order to clarify a detail:

un meuble sur lequel il y avait, dit-il, des choses que venaient prendre les garçons - "Une desserte", dit l'étudiant, et lui: "Si. Sans doute. Parce que je crois bien qu'en haut il y avait des fruits, un de ces trucs comme une pomme de pin. Je n'ai pas eu le temps de bien voir." (p.62)

Similarly, in Histoire a musical analogy underlines the illusion in the notion of exactitude:

de même que le son tiré par l'archet de la corde d'un violon n'est jamais d'une fréquence fixe mais une hésitation autour de cette notion abstraite et sans réalité qu'est la note exacte. (p.356)

15. "L'une d'elles" is an example of "pronominal ambiguity" where the absence of direct naming allows for unexpected shift of referential context. In the opening pages of the novel, "elles" refers, respectively, to the trees, the narrator's old relatives, and the birds fluttering outside the window. The references to Hélène are equally shrouded with ambiguity as her name is never mentioned by the narrator. (See pp.365-7). As the following chapter will show,



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pronominal ambiguity is a striking feature of the narrative structure of La Bataille de Pharsale.

16. Michel Deguy 'Claude Simon et la représentation', Critique, no. 187 (December 1962), p. 1014.
  17. Claude Simon: analyse, théorie, p. 423.
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Notes to Part II Chapter One.

1. Jean Ricardou Roble-trillet: analyse, théorie 2 vols Paris (U.G....) 1976, II 43-4.
2. It would seem that this definition of intertextuality owes much to Merleau-Ponty who stressed that all language is endowed with a "sens institué":

Il s'agit, pour ce voeu muet qu'est l'intention significative, de réaliser un certain arrangement des instruments déjà signifiants ou des significations déjà parlantes (instruments morphologiques, syntaxiques, lexicaux, genres littéraires, types de récit, modes de présentation de l'événement, etc...) qui suscite chez l'auditeur le pressentiment d'une signification autre et neuve et inversement accomplisse chez celui qui parle ou qui écrit l'ancrage de la signification inédite dans les significations déjà disponibles. Mais pourquoi, comment, en quel sens, celles-ci sont-elles disponibles? Elles le sont devenues quand elles ont, en leur temps, été instituées comme significations auxquelles je puis avoir recours, que j'ai - par une opération expressive de même sorte.

Signes Paris (Gallimard) 1960, p.113.

3. Julia Kristeva "Problèmes de la structuration du texte" in Théorie d'Ensemble Paris (Seuil) 1968, p.311.
4. Nicole Boithorel, Francine Lugast, Jean Thoraval Les Nouveaux romanciers Paris (Boréas) 1976, p.99.
5. Jonathan Culler Structuralist Poetics London (Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1975, p.139.
6. *Infra* p. ix
7. See Culler *op.cit.* p.139.
8. *Infra* footnote 2 above.
9. Laurent Jenny 'La Stratégie de la forme', Poétique, no.27, (1976), p.269. It is incorrect to say that all the literary fragments are narratively motivated. Sometimes the motivation is purely paronomastic.
10. *Ibid* p.266.
11. *Ibid* p.275.
12. The critic brackets la bataille de Ipharsale with the "écritures intertextuelles des lettres" *ibid* p.281. Simon, however, does not limit himself to literary quotations. The novelist has actually stated that he attaches the same value to an extract from Froust as

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to an advertisement as far as the collage structure of his work is concerned. See Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui 2 vols Paris (U.G.E.) 1972, II 113.

13. Jean Ricardou "'Claude Simon', textuellement" in Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (U.G.E.) 1975, p.11.
14. Alain Robbe-Grillet Topologie d'une cité fantôme Paris (Minuit) 1976, pp.136-8. "Intertextualité restreinte" is also active in Projet pour une révolution à New York which contains a sentence from Dans le labyrinthe ("Dehors il pleut ..." p.34), the same name (Manneret) as appears in la Maison de rendez-vous, the bicycle from le Voyeur, and the "scutigère" from La Jalousie. See Nicole Bothorel, Francine Lugast, Jean Thoraval Les Nouveaux romanciers op.cit. p.95, where the term used is "internal intertextuality".
15. Laurent Jenny describes intertextuality as "l'instrument de parole privilégié des époques d'effritement et de renaissance culturels", art.cit. p.281.
16. See James Atherton The Books at the Wake London (Faber and Faber) 1959.
17. See Ricardou Pour une théorie du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1971, p.164 and p.163, also Ricardou "Esquisse d'une théorie des générateurs" in Positions et oppositions sur le roman contemporain Paris (Klincksieck) 1971, p.154.
18. See Georges Charbonnier Entretiens avec Michel Butor Paris (Gallimard) 1967, p.144.
19. Bruce Morrissette Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet Paris (Minuit) 1963, p.117.
20. Laurent Jenny art.cit. p.260.
21. Philippe Sollers "Ecriture et révolution" in Théorie d'Ensemble, p.76.
22. Ibid.
23. Laurent Jenny art.cit. p.262. Once again, one can discern a similarity between this description of intertextuality and Merleau-Ponty's description of the workings of language:

La parole, en tant que distincte de la langue, est ce moment où l'intention significative et tout en acte s'avère capable de s'incorporer à la culture, la mienne et celle d'autrui, de me former et de le former en transformant le sens des instruments culturels. Elle devient "disponible" à son tour parce qu'elle nous donne après coup l'illusion qu'elle était contenue

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dans des significations déjà disponibles, alors que, par une sorte de ruse, elle ne les a épousées que pour leur infuser une nouvelle vie.

Signes Paris (Gallimard) 1960, p.115.

25. Jean Ricardou Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, II 281.

26. Michel Butor "Critique et Invention" in Répertoire III Paris (Minuit) 1968, p.13.

27. Georges Charbonnier Entretiens avec Michel Butor Paris (Gallimard) 1967, p.144.

28. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui, II 113-4.

29. John Fletcher Claude Simon and Fiction Now London (Calder and Boyars) 1975 pp.175-96.

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Signes Paris (Gallimard) 1960, p.115.

25. Jean Ricardou Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui. II 281.

26. Michel Butor "Critique et Invention" in Répertoire III Paris (Minuit) 1968, p.13.

27. Georges Charbonnier Entretiens avec Michel Butor Paris (Gallimard) 1967, p.144.

28. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui. II 113-4.

29. John Fletcher Claude Simon and Fiction Now London (Calder and Boyars) 1975 pp.175-96.

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Notes to Part II Chapter Two.

1. Stephen Heath 'Narrative Space', Parallax, vol.17, no.3, (Autumn 1976), pp.75-8.
2. Ibid pp.80-1.
3. Claude Simon, interview with Claude DuVerlie in Sub-Stance, no.8, (Winter 1974), p.8.
4. In order to distinguish between italics and non-italics in the text, I have underlined the words which are not in italics in the text.
5. Jean Ricardou Pour une théorie du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1971, p.142.
6. Claude Simon Histoire Paris (Minuit) 1967, p.273.
7. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui 2 vols Paris (U.C.E.) 1972, p.74.
8. Claude Simon explains the use of the pictograms of two legs in place of the "A"s in "pantalon" and the lapel to replace the "V" in "veston" as something which he had seen on the street and which amused him. *ibid* p.429.  
 The use of pictograms dates back, of course, to Sterne's Tristram Shandy but a closer analogy can be found in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury where Jason, recovering from a blow on the head, sees an electric sign: "Keep your ~~eye~~ on lotsam, the gap filled by a human eye with an electric pupil". William Faulkner The Sound and the Fury Harmondsworth (Penguin) 1972, p.275.  
 The opposite effect is produced in Morritte's famous "realistic" painting, entitled "La Trahison des Images" (1928-9), containing the words "Ceci n'est pas une pipe". Morritte's point is that his pipe is not a pipe but a representation of a pipe and consequently stresses the fictionality of painting. In the case of the pictograms, it is the materiality of fiction and writing which is emphasized.
9. Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (U.C.E.) 1975, p.424.
10. It may perhaps be misleading to talk of "triptych structure" in both Le Tricheur and The Sound and the Fury because of the existence of a fourth chapter in each book. This argument may be all the more convincing since in both cases it is the fourth chapter which stands out from the rest of the novel providing a kind of connecting link: in Simon's novel it is Louis's "acte gratuit" and in Faulkner's it is the third person singular narrative.
11. See Stuart Sykes 'Ternary Form in Three Novels by Claude Simon', Symposium, vol.XXII, no.1, (Spring 1978), p.31.
12. *Ibid* p.166.
13. Au contraire, la notion phénoménologique de "motivation" est l'un de ces concepts éluants qu'il faut bien former si l'on veut

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revenir aux phénomènes. Un phénomène en déclenche un autre, non par une efficacité objective, comme celle qui relie les événements de la nature, mais par le sens qu'il offre, -il y a une raison d'être qui oriente le flux des phénomènes sans être explicitement posée en aucun d'eux, une sorte de raison opérante.

Merleau-Ponty La phénoménologie de la perception Paris (Gallimard) 1945, p.61.

14. Ricardou op.cit. p.126.

15. Ibid p.143.

16. Ibid p.142.

17. The same system of signification by juxtaposition of colour is noted by Lotman in the films of Eisenstein.

L'effet de juxtaposition (l'effet de montage selon la terminologie d'Eisenstein) est organiquement lié à la transmutation dans une autre structure. Par conséquent, au moment du passage d'un segment au suivant, l'auteur (ou le public, dans la structure de son attente) doit avoir au moins deux possibilités: la continuation d'une organisation structurale déjà connue, ou l'apparition d'une nouvelle. C'est justement dans le choix et dans la projection réciproque du texte et de l'attente (dans l'inertie de la structure) que se trouve l'information artistique, engendrée à cette occasion. Ainsi, par exemple, quand au cinéma nous avons affaire à une bande uniformément noire et blanche ou uniformément colorée, la couleur de chaque image suivante est dictée à l'avance de manière *univoque* par la couleur des images précédentes, et l'alternative "noir et blanc - en couleur" ne peut être porteuse de signification. Mais imaginons un film dont certaines images sont en couleur, tandis que les autres sont en noir et blanc. Alors le choix, l'attente et la juxtaposition de telles ou telles images selon le principe du rapport des couleurs, deviennent porteuses de signification. Le cinéma contemporain va encore plus loin. Une ordonnance fondamentale est introduite: images bicolores - images multicolores, qui entre elles se divisent en sous-groupes (bleu sombre/ bleu clair, marron - jaune etc. pour le premier une polychromie à dominante diverse pour le second). Alors apparaît la possibilité d'un système complexe de juxtapositions: images bicolores - polychromes et divers types des unes ou des autres à l'intérieur de chaque groupe. Le metteur en scène peut lier une couleur à un héros déterminé, créant un simulacre de thème musical ou en identifiant des couleurs déterminées à des "points de vue" ou à une tension émotionnelle (auxiliaire de l'intonation), il peut créer une information complémentaire.

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- Iouri Iotman La Structure du texte artistique Paris (Finuit) 1973, pp.387-8.
18. Ricardou Le Nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1972, p.127.
19. The diagram which Simon has used to convey the compositional structure of La Bataille de Pharsale as a whole is based on this motif. See Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II 95.
20. The Pecker cube is a figure of geometrical optical illusion which has caught the attention of several philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty, the Gestalt Psychologists, Ernst Cassirer, and Erwin Panofsky. Perception of this reversible figure oscillates between two possible interpretations. The interesting point about the Pecker cube is that it contains two frames. The oscillation between the frames depends on an absence of content. Once an object is drawn inside the cube, perception is fixed only on one point of perspective.
21. Note the implicit reference and subversion of the "aperta finestra" of traditional perspective.
22. Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II 95.
23. Ricardou Pour une théorie du nouveau roman, p.202. Ricardou's description of the whole of section "C" as a pastiche of the language of geometry is also supported by the Euclidean perspective of the woman reading her book. In his Optics, Euclid claims that rays of vision emanate from the eye of the perceiver. A parallel motif can be found in the description of a spotlight or the "cône de lumière" of a film being projected onto a screen often found in Simon's novels including La Bataille de Pharsale ("faisceau de projecteur" (p.182)).
24. Roland Mortier, 'Discontinuité et rupture dans la Bataille de Pharsale', Degrés, no.2. (1973), p.62.
25. Ricardou Pour une théorie du nouveau roman, p.151.
26. Ibid p.153.
27. Stuart Sykes, '"Lise en abyme" in the novels of Claude Simon', Forum for Modern Language Studies, vol.IX, no.4, (October 1973), pp.337-8.
28. Dominique Lanceraux 'Modalités de la narration dans la Route des Flandres', Poétique, no.14, (1973), p.238.
29. La Route des Flandres Paris (Finuit) 1960, p.41.
30. Ibid p.29.
31. Ibid p.62.
32. John Lyons's term is "ready-made" utterance" in Theoretical Linguistics Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1969, p.177.



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33. La Route des Flandres, p.165.
34. Marcel Hroust A la recherche du temps perdu 3 vols Paris (Gallimard) 1954, III 53.
35. Ibid I 263.
36. Robbe-Grillet La Jalousie Paris (Minuit) 1957, p.135.
37. L'attention avec laquelle le gentil chauffeur en avait suivi chaque pas me tenait beaucoup [...]  
Il est certain que ce récit du mécanicien en m'étant toute crainte qu'Albertine m'eût trompé, me refroidit tout naturellement à l'égard de mon amie et me rendit moins intéressante la journée qu'elle avait passée à Versailles.
- A la recherche du temps perdu, I 134.
38. Ibid I p.306.
39. Lack of equivalent terminology in Anglo-Laxon rhetoric necessitates the rather clumsy use of the French terms "comparé" and "comparant". A clear example of the inversion between the two can be found in the following sentence from Dylan Thomas's "A Visit to Grandpa's": "The floorboards had squeaked like mice as I climbed into bed, and the mice between the walls had creaked like wood as though another visitor was walking on them". Portrait of the artist as a Young Dog London (Dent) 1940, p.40.  
In the first half of the sentence the "comparé" is the "floorboards" and the "comparant" is "mice"; and in the second part the "comparé" is "mice" and the "comparant" is "wood".
40. Olga Bernal Alain Robbe-Grillet: le roman de l'absence Paris (Gallimard) 1964, p.115.
41. A la recherche du temps perdu, III 310.
42. Ibid I pp.27-3.
43. Ibid III p.167.
44. La Jalousie, p.108.
45. Ibid p.109.
46. This play might be described in its structuralism of the text as "metaplastic", adapting from rhetoric the term "metaplastic" meaning, in the definition given by the Oxford English Dictionary, "change or transmutation in a word by adding, transposing or retrenching a syllable or a letter."
- Stephen Heath The Nouveau Roman London (Eld) 1972, p.147.

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47. La Jalousie pp.108.

48. Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon, 'D. Claude Simon : l'écrit: un exemple d'intertextualité', Lettres Nouvelles, no.4, (1972), pp.119. The critic also lists the various fragments of la recherche du temps perdu in la bataille de l'harsale and has cited their original page references. She has, however, omitted to point out the final two groups of fragments. They are as follows:

La bataille de l'harsale (pp.204-5):

"reprit son premier /.../ coin de", A la recherche III 772.

"toujours /.../ chez eux", ibid III 776.

"ce régent /.../ il l'est de ", ibid III 779.

"parents /.../ homme qu'ils ", ibid III 780.

"encore /.../ telles que", ibid III 790.

la bataille de l'harsale (p.206):

"tous ces grands valets /.../ répétait que", A la recherche III 794.

"plus obscure /.../ consolant pour", ibid III 800.

"projecteurs /.../ aéroplanes", ibid III 801.

"tandis que /.../ probablement", ibid III 808.

"le 43 /.../ fumée ici", ibid III 206.

49. Jacques Nathan Citations, références et allusions de Marcel Proust dans "A la recherche" Paris (Nizet) 1969, p.12.

50. Quoted by Jean Milly in Les Particules de Proust Paris (Armand Collin) 1970, p.37.

51. Infra p.8.

52. Infra p.68.

53. Françoise Van Rossum-Guyon 'Ut pictura poesis', Debris, no.3, (1973), p.12.

54. Bruce Morrisette Les Romans de Robbe-Grillet Paris (Minuit) 1963, p.117.

55. Nicole Bothorel, Francine Lugast, Jean Thoraval Les Nouveaux romanciers Paris (Lodas) 1976, p.96.

56. "La Jalousie" is also the title of a painting by Lucas Cranach described on page 228.

57. This may seem paradoxical since Simon has admitted his dislike of the quattrocento view of perspective. See infra p. 14.

58. Pierluigi de Vecchi Tout l'oeuvre peint de Piero della Francesca Paris (Flammarion) 1968, p.91.

59. Ricardou Problèmes du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1967, p.32.  
As the critic notes, this principle is often at work in Robbe-Grillet's

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later novels such as la Maison de rendez-vous, Projet pour une révolution à New York, and Topologie d'une cité fantôme.

60. This is a similar example of textual irony as the one we noted in Histoire in the words "en regardant bien". See *infra* p.54.
61. Laurent Jenny, 'La Stratégie de la forme', Poétique, no.27, (1976), p.268.
62. This is the basic position adopted by Pierre Francastel in la Figure et le Lieu Paris (Gallimard) 1967, p.39:
- Autrement dit, voir une oeuvre figurative, c'est découvrir non pas le reflet, la projection d'un événement, mais d'un système.
63. Jacques Dubois et al. Rhétorique générale Paris (Larousse) 1970, p.66.
64. Laurent Jenny *art.cit.* p.272.
65. Michel Butor les Mots dans la peinture Paris (Skira) 1969, p.33:
- Toute inscription, à l'intérieur du cadre, va attirer le regard d'autant plus longtemps, donc d'autant plus fortement, qu'elle nous demandera plus d'effort pour la déchiffrer; le peintre, par sa géométrie, doit intégrer ou au moins compenser cette formidable attraction.
66. Georges Charbonnier Entretiens avec Claude Lévi-Strauss Paris (U.G.E.) 1961, pp.114-5.
- ce n'est pas chaque objet lui-même qu'est oeuvre d'art, ce sont certaines dispositions, certains arrangements, certains rapprochements entre les objets. Exactement comme les mots du langage: en eux-mêmes, ils ont un sens très flou, presque vide, ils ne prennent vraiment leur sens que dans un contexte/.../ Dans les "ready-made", que ceux qui les ont inventés en aient été pleinement conscients ou non (mais je crois qu'ils en étaient conscients, parce que les surréalistes n'ont jamais manqué de vigueur de pensée théorique), ce sont les "phrases" faites avec des objets qui ont un sens, et non pas l'objet seul, quoiqu'on ait voulu faire ou dire. C'est un objet dans un contexte d'objets [7]
67. Van Rossum-Guyon, De Claude Simon à Proust p.127.
68. *Ibid* p.135:

Car c'est bien en "renonçant" à Proust, à ses descriptions anecdotiques, à son analyse psychologique, à sa conception même du temps, que Simon a construit son oeuvre.

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69. Gérard Genette Figures Paris (Seuil) 1966, p.132.

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Notes to Part III Chapter One.

1. Vivian Mercier The New Novel: from Gide to Flaubert New York (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) 1971, p.267.
2. R.-M. Albères Essai littéraire du XXe siècle Paris (Lizet) 1971, p.117.
3. Alain Robbe-Grillet Pour un nouveau roman Paris (L'Inuit) 1963, p.127.
4. Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (U.G.E.) 1975, p.412.
5. Il y a dans le son que le spectateur entend, dans l'image qu'il voit, une qualité primordiale: c'est du présent. Les ruptures du montage, les répétitions de scène, les contradictions, les personnages tout à coup figés comme sur des photos d'amateur, donnent à ce présent perpétuel toute sa force, toute sa violence. Il ne s'agit plus alors de la nature des images, mais de leur composition, et c'est là seulement que le romancier peut retrouver, quoique *transformées*, certaines de ses préoccupations d'écriture.  
Pour un nouveau roman p.128.
6. Jean Ricardou Nouveaux problèmes du roman Paris (Seuil) 1978, p.186.  
This passage is approvingly quoted by Claude Simon in La Nouvelle Critique, no.105, (June-July 1977), p.33.  
Elsewhere, Ricardou has formulated the same point more directly:  
Lire le texte moderne, ce n'est pas être victime  
d'une illusion de réalité, c'est se montrer attentif  
à la réalité du texte.  
"Esquisse d'une théorie de générateurs" in Positions et oppositions sur le roman contemporain Paris (Minksiack) 1971, p.143.
7. Jean Ricardou interview with Jean Thibaudou in La Nouvelle Critique, no.60, (January 1973), p.67.
8. Claude Simon extract from interview with Monique Jocquet on France Culture in Le Figaro Littéraire, no.1559, (3 April 1976), p.14.
9. Claude Simon "La fiction mot à mot" in Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui 2 vols Paris (U.G.E.) 1972, II 80.
10. The description of a poster in Les Corps conducteurs acknowledges the stress on the textual significance of the material quality of language. The physical quality of the picture adds to its representational effect.  
La mauvaise qualité du cliché, l'encre d'imprimerie du journal elle-même de mauvaise qualité, grasse et grise, accentuent l'aspect poisseux, suintant et humide de la scène. (p.149)

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11. Thus it can be said that the original title of Les Corps conducteurs, "Propriétés de quelques figures, géométriques ou non", would have referred less to mathematics or the world of objects and more to the materiality of language.
  12. A.-J. Greimas Sémantique structurale Paris (Larousse) 1966, p.70.
  13. Max Ernst Au-delà de la peinture Paris (Cahiers d'Art) 1937, p.30.
  14. Chklovski's concept of "strangeness" has been discussed by Umberto Eco in L'Oeuvre Cuverte Paris (Seuil) 1965, pp.110-1 and by Stephen Bann who describes the process as a "systematic placing out of context" in 'Robert Rauschenberg: the End of a Modern Way', Twentieth Century Studies, vol.6, (December 1971), p.18.
  15. Victor Chklovski "La Construction de la nouvelle et du roman" in Théorie de la littérature Paris (Seuil) 1966, p.184.
  16. Claude Simon 'Réponses de Claude Simon à quelques questions écrites de Ludovic Janvier', Entretiens, (1972), p.23.  
Chklovski's "fait littéraire" may be also described as a "fait artistique" if we compare his description of "ostranenia" with the following lines by Jean Dubuffet whose paintings, as we shall see in part IV chapter two, provided the stimulus for the "rural" narrative sequence in Triptyque:  

Je dois dire que j'éprouve une sorte de plaisir  
à mêler ainsi des faits qui n'appartiennent pas aux  
mêmes registres, il me semble que cela occasionne  
toutes manières de transports et de polarisations à  
la faveur de quoi les objets se trouvent éclairés  
par des lumières inhabituelles susceptibles d'en  
révéler des sens inconnus.

Prospectus et tous écrits suivants 2 vols Paris (Gallimard) 1967,  
II 74-5.
  17. Jonathan Culler Structuralist Poetics London (Routledge and Kegan Paul) 1975, p.80.
  18. Ibid p.87.
  19. Ibid p.91.
  20. Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (L.G.E.) 1975, p.12.
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1. Claud DuVerlie 'Sur deux oeuvres de Claude Simon', Die Neuren Sprache, no.9 (1972), p.547.
2. Jean-Claude Baillon 'Eléments d'une physique littéraire', Deprés, vol.1, no.4, (October 1974), p.64.
3. Jean Ricardou Louveau problèmes du roman Paris (Seuil) 1978, p.240.
4. DuVerlie art. cit. p.546. DuVerlie's interpretation of Orion aveugle is, in fact, very misguided. The "jeu de rapports illustration - description" (p.546) in this book is not as interesting as the critic claims. Such a reading would be more relevant if applied to Robbe-Grillet's La Belle captive where the interest lies in the deviations of the descriptions of Magritte's paintings around which the narrative appears to be constructed. Apart from the first sentence, the written text of Orion aveugle is a word for word repetition of the first part of Les Corps conducteurs. It is true that Orion aveugle contains many, but not all, of the pictures which served as "stimuli" for the writing. But since this contiguity does not affect the writing, it is of no more than anecdotal interest to the reader. Simon himself has said that the presentation of Orion aveugle was less his choice than a compliance with the "Sentiers de la création" series, all the texts of which are accompanied by illustrations:

Orion aveugle est le résultat d'une commande de Skira. J'ai placé ces stimulants pour montrer comment le texte avait fonctionné puisque le titre de la collection est "Les Sentiers de la création". Mais ils ne doivent pas être tenus en compte dans un livre final. Si Les Corps conducteurs devaient être accompagné de l'image des stimulants extratextuels, alors ce serait un échec pour moi.

Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui 2 vols Paris (L.G.F.) 1972, II 108.

The interesting point to note, surely, is that a comparison of Orion aveugle and Les Corps conducteurs reinforces the argument that the referents of the descriptions in Les Corps conducteurs are ambiguous and that this novel is less concerned with describing the world of objects than with the polysemic production of textual signification. DuVerlie has, however, unfortunately missed this too:

Depuis Le Vent (1957) l'art simonien s'est imposé par ses descriptions fondées sur des tableaux ou des photos, ou encore qui viennent s'organiser mentalement sous forme de tableaux ou de photos, c'est-à-dire qui, d'une manière ou d'une autre, renvoient toujours à une référence visuelle soit invisible pour le lecteur soit simplement imaginaire. Ce trait particulier se retrouve de nouveau dans ces deux derniers livres, et dans Les Corps conducteurs, parfois à la suite d'une image longuement décrite, une référence est notée entre parenthèses comme par désir d'authentifier la description: "(Vélin du Musée national d'Histoire naturelle peint par de Mailly. Vol.80, no.54)". (p.216)

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Duverlie art.cit. p.544. As we shall see later, the "authentication" is neither real nor imaginary: it is ironical.

5. Jean Ricardou "'Claude Simon', textuellement" in Claude Simon: analyse théorie Paris (U.G.E.) 1975, p.19.
6. "Le Dispositif osirique" first appeared as an article in Etudes Littéraires, vol.9, no.1, (1976).
7. Ricardou "'Claude Simon', textuellement', p.17.
8. The most famous instances of digression are in Sterne's Tristram Shandy.
9. Ricardou loc. cit.
10. In Nouveaux problèmes du roman, Ricardou lists a number of common denominators between the two sequences (p.207).
11. Ricardou "'Claude Simon', textuellement' p.18.
12. The terms "referential" and "literal" are borrowed from Ricardou in Pour une théorie du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1971, pp.33-8, and Le Nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1973, pp.29-31.
13. The first use of the term "métaphore structurelle" can be found in Ricardou's Problèmes du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1967, p.48, with reference to La Route des Irlandais.
14. Ricardou "'Claude Simon', textuellement', p.15.
15. Ricardou Nouveaux problèmes du roman, p.196.
16. Ibid p.231.
17. There are two narrative sequences in Faulkner's The Wild Palms. Unlike those in Les Corps conducteurs which continually intermingle, the two narrative "isotopies" remain within the boundaries of their own chapter: "Wild Palms" and "Old Man".
18. One may draw an analogy between the definition of synecdoche and the concept of "hyponymy" in semantics where a "superordinate" or "upper term" encompasses, by way of a hierarchical classification or "arborescence", several "hyponyms" or "lower terms". According to F.R.Palmer, "hyponymy involves the logical relationship of entailment". Semantics Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1976, p.78.
19. Gerard Genette Figures III Paris (Seuil) 1972, p.27.
20. All underlinings of quotes from Les Corps conducteurs are my own.
21. Some of the omissions from the list are the description of the "vieux roi" peeping through the curtains at a couple making love which is based on a Picasso drawing, and a description of a painting



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showing dancing girls on stage (p.65) both of which, like the description of Poussin's "Orion", despite the suggestion that they are seen at a museum, remain unframed. There are also two "mini-sequences" which float independently of the rest of the novel: the description of the conversation with the professor (pp.114-7), ( a variant of the scene at the doctor's in sequence B: "figurine"/ "sculpture"); and the description of the bird of prey flying around the mountain-tops ripping its food with its beak (pp.31-2).

22. The same question arises here as the one we came across with regard to intertextuality: what happens when a reader creates a text of his own either, through intertextuality, by weaving a network of patterns and relations with other texts, or, as in this case, by producing patterns of association which contradict the linear composition of the syntax?
23. For both Ricardou and Raillon, the "théorie matérialiste du récit" is founded on the Marxist concept of a "logique de la contradiction".
24. 'Un homme traversé par le travail', la Nouvelle Critique, no.105, (June-July 1977), p.33.
25. See *infra* note 10, p.281.
26. Ricardou Nouveaux problèmes du roman p.218.
27. Ibid p.219. Ricardou defines the four types of articulation in the following way: "augmentation" is the development of the narrative within an unbroken fragment; "continuation" is the return, after a "coupure", to a preceding fragment; "prolongation" is the return, after a "rupture", to a preceding sequence; "jonction" is the merger of two separate sequences into one. See p.221.
28. Ibid p.219. See tableaux IX and X for a list of the different types of correspondences.
29. Ibid p.223.
30. Ibid pp.228-9.
31. Ibid p.224.
32. Ibid p.229.
33. Ibid p.230.
34. Jean-Claude Raillon, "La loi de conduction" in Claude Simon: analyse, théorie p.279.
35. Ricardou Nouveaux problèmes du roman, p.213. As Ricardou says, an "amphibologie" functions in the opposite way to repetition: it is a word which has two meanings. It differs from a pun, however, in that the two meanings are not expressed simultaneously. For a few

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examples, see Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes Paris (Seuil) 1975, pp.76-7.

36. Ricardou Claude Simon: analyse, théorie, p.23.

37. Metaphorical comparison can be seen to be the "harbinger" of instances of descriptive confusion, as in this case where the passage begins with the following comparison:

Franchi le seuil, il est brutalement surpris  
par la fraîcheur, le silence et la pénombre  
épaisse dans laquelle il avance en hésitant,  
comme s'il pénétrait dans une de ces vieilles  
photographies tirées sur un papier foncé et  
rougeâtre supprimant les demi-teintes [57] (p.86)

There is another way in which metaphorical comparison, through the play of inversion, produces an osmosis between different fictional units, or what one might call "inter-frame activity". One example of this is the inversion between the sound of applause in the conference hall in sequence D which is like the crackling sound of a telephone line (p.100), and the noise on the telephone in sequence A which is like the sound of applause (p.104). Another example is the inversion between the "chenilles" which the man sees after rubbing his eyes in sequence A and the description immediately following, in block IV, of the leaves whose veins are "courbées comme des cils" which are favoured by caterpillars (pp.162-3).

This forms the fundamental compositional structure of Simon's novels which the author has described as "un jeu de miroirs internes" in Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui II 108.

38. This dominant "signifié" can also be found in other segments: "Machaon" block IV (p.150), "Machonna" sequence D (p.144), "Maquettiste" sequence C (p.110). We may remember that the same repetition was found in la Route des Flandres in part I chapter two of this thesis.

39. blocks I and III also resemble one another in that the cartoon depicts a group of interns led by a bearded surgeon and the postage stamp depicts a group of soldiers led by a bearded man. The fact that the interns are sometimes referred to as "de jeunes carabins hilares armés de divers instruments chirurgicaux" confirms the resemblance. It should, therefore, come as no surprise to find that the first instance of the postage stamp description is immediately preceded by a segment from sequence A in which there is a description of a delivery man cramming the back of his lorry with empty carton boxes (our attention is drawn to this detail by the threefold repetition of "carton"). The amphibological possibilities of this word and the link which it creates between block I and sequence A have already been discussed.

40. The phrase, deriving from Irouet's "éternel imparfait", is borrowed from an article by Roger Huss on the special use of tense in Flaubert's novels: 'Some anomalous uses of the imperfect and the status of action in Flaubert', French Studies, vol.LXI, no.2 (April 1977).

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p.141.

41. It should be noted that the term "fantastic" was first used by Ricardou in "'Claude Simon', textuellement" with specific reference to this phenomenon in Les Corps conducteurs. By "fantastic", Ricardou meant precisely the distortion of a narrative sequence as a result of the influence of an incompatible element which originates from a different fictional unit.
42. This is an echo of the Graham Greene pastiche in La Bataille de Pharsale.
43. Infra p.3.
44. Michel Le Guern defines the notion of "isotopic" as "l'homogénéité sémantique d'un énoncé ou d'une partie d'énoncé" in Sémantique de la métaphore et de la métonymie Paris (Larousse) 1973, p.16.
45. Stephen Mann defines this activity as "reciprocal transference" and refers to the same passage in the novel in "Robert Linco: The End of a Modern Way", Twentieth Century Studies, vol 6, (December 1971), p.19:  

What happens in this passage, and in many others throughout the book, is a kind of reciprocal transference between the highly charged sexual description and the highly coloured working model of the body. The continuity of Les Corps conducteurs is, therefore, an index of the common intensity of descriptive language, even though what is described arises from different levels of sense. The tendency of the different levels to interpenetrate while remaining conceptually distinct is a measure of their conductivity.
46. The corresponding phrases are "l'ouverture ménagée affecte à peu près la forme de la cuisse d'une guitare, légèrement étranglée à la hauteur de la taille" (p.9) and "un fir tuyaer qui se divise à une fourche dont les branches ... " (p.10).
47. This instance of descriptive confusion is coupled later on by a similar passage this time enumerating the anatomical fragments as seen from behind (p.20).
48. Furthermore, the description block is itself in a larger constellation: that of the whole novel. The poetic significance of "constellation" here is similar to the one in Mallarmé's "Un Coup de dés".
49. It should be stressed that although instances of description blocks relate to one another synecdochically, in other words they refer directly to their original framework, referents or "textual elements" within a block are related metonymically, that is by contiguity.
50. The same memo is repeated earlier in the description of the breed of butterfly called "Papiféria Militaris" (p.149).
51. Metonymy is the reference to an object via the name of another object.

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with which it is logically related.

52. The description is nonetheless undeniably part of block IV as is shown in the following passage:

Enrichies ou déformées par l'imagination des dessinateurs elles sont d'un aspect fabuleux, de tailles démesurées et d'anatomies composites, mi-partie cheval et dragon, oiseau et reptile, taureau et poisson, leurs corps pourvus d'écailles, de carapaces et de plumes. Parmi le scintillement des étoiles de différentes grandeurs qui dessinent les constellations, les centaures, les peons aux plumes couvertes d'yeux, les chèvres à queues de dragons, les loups et les aigles, la silhouette du géant se découpe en noir. (p.112)

53. Once again a comparison with Iroust can prove to be fruitful. The "metaphorical" or "osmotic" character of Elstir's paintings is based on a subversion of the names of objects:

si Dieu le père avait créé les choses en les nommant c'est en leur ôtant leur nom, ou en leur donnant un autre, qu'Elstir les récréait. Les noms qui désignent les choses répondent toujours à une notion de l'intelligence, étrangère à nos impressions véritables, et qui nous force à éliminer d'elles tout ce qui ne se rapporte pas à cette notion.

A la recherche du temps perdu 3 vols Paris (Gallimard) 1954, I 835.

54. Stephen Heath The Nouveau Roman London (Elek) 1972, p.111
55. There is an obvious similarity with the description of the banana plantation in Robbe-Grillet's La Jalousie.
56. John Lyons Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1968, p.409. As Lyons notes, the act of pointing involves a more complicated process of signification than this theory suggests.
57. For a discussion of the "semiotic triangle" see F.R.Falmer Semantics Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1976, p.26.
58. This perhaps is one of the implications in the recurrent motif of "unattained destination" such as Orion's march: "Tout indique qu'il n'atteindra jamais son but ..." (p.222).
59. Claude Simon: analyse, théorie p.412.
60. Marcel Iroust A la recherche du temps perdu III 538
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Notes to Part IV Chapter I

1. Lucien Dällenbach Le Récit spéculaire Paris (Seuil) 1977, p.79.
2. Ibid p.199.
3. Ibid p.123. The concept of textual "mise en abyme" and its definition as reflecting the literal aspect of the text was first put forward by Jean Ricardou in Problèmes du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1967, p.189.
4. Ibid p.131.
5. Ibid p.132.
6. Ibid p.137.
7. Ibid p.18.
8. Erving Goffman Frame Analysis Harmondsworth (Penguin) 1975, p.404.

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1. Jean Ricardou, "'Claude Simon', textuellement" in Claude Simon: analyse, théorie Paris (U.G.E.) 1975, p.19.
2. Sylvère Lotringer, "Cryptique", *ibid* pp. 313-33.
3. François Jost, 'Claude Simon: topographies de la description et du texte', Critique, tome XXX, no.330, (November 1975), pp.1031-40.
4. Lotringer, *op.cit.* p.325.
5. Jost, *art.cit.* p.1040.
6. Lotringer, *op.cit.* p.321.
7. It also seems strange that Lotringer should resort to a scientific analogy at the same time as doubting the validity of the role of science in relation to a modern text. Moreover, the analogy with biology is itself reminiscent of Feilcke's discussion of the relationship between the "molecular" and the "molar" in Principles of Gestalt Psychology New York (Harcourt, Brace and Co.) 1935, p.25.
8. Lotringer, *op.cit.* p.321.
9. *Ibid* p.320.
10. Jost, *art.cit.* p.1038.
11. Jost, *art.cit.* p.1031.
12. Simon in Claude Simon: analyse, théorie p.425:

Mais au départ, j'avais seulement en tête deux séries (celle de la campagne et celle de la banlieue industrielle).  
La-dessus, à l'automne 1971, a eu lieu à Paris la grande rétrospective de Francis Bacon dont non seulement la peinture m'a fortement impressionné, mais dont certaines oeuvres avaient pour titre Triptyque, titre et principe que j'ai trouvés en eux-mêmes tellement excitants que j'ai décidé d'adjoindre à mes deux premières séries une troisième, celle de la station balnéaire, inspirée d'ailleurs elle-même par des toiles de Bacon.

See also the interview with Claude DuVerlie in Sub-Stance, no.8, (Winter 1974), p.4, and the interview in la Nouvelle Critique, no.105, (June-July 1977), p.40.
13. Bacon describes the images in his paintings as "organic form that relates to the human image but is a complete distortion of it".  
Interviews with Francis Bacon London (Thames and Hudson) 1975, p.8.
14. *Ibid* p.76.

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15. Ibid p.22.
16. Lucien Dällenbach sees this as an example of "mise en abyme de l'énonciation". The clown, "champion du calembour", is an "auto-portrait travesti" of the author in Le Récit spéculaire Paris (Seuil) 1977, p.199.
17. Ricardou Le Nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1973, pp.124-30.
18. Ibid p.124.
19. Lotringer op.cit. p.315.
20. See John Sturrock The French New Novel London (Oxford University Press) 1969, p.54:

the dying Aunt Marie, who can teach the next generation a lesson without even returning to consciousness, has passed on to her niece Louise, the narrator, a box of odds and ends, which the girl spends a long time trying to interpret; this interpretation is an intuitive one, for she is finally able to deduce from the attentive study of a photograph that the lesson of the dying aunt's life has been one of renunciation.

This interpretative approach to "mise en abyme" is similar to C.E. Hagny's who saw the latter as reflecting "quelques-unes des thèmes majeurs du livre". See Dällenbach op.cit. p.34.
21. Dällenbach op.cit. p.196.
22. Ibid p.195.
23. The term is borrowed from Ricardou Le Nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1973, pp.112-7 and Nouveaux problèmes du roman Paris (Seuil) 1976, p.235.
24. Ricardou, 'Un tour d'érou textuel', Magazine Littéraire, no.74, (mars 1973), p.33.
25. It is Stuart Sykes who has baptized this sequence as the "Nice" sequence thereby paronomastically echoing "Nico".  
'Ternary ~~form~~ in three novels by Claude Simon', Symposium, vol.XXXII, no.1, (Spring 1978), p.36.
26. Dällenbach's definition of "mise en abyme" is "toute enclave entretenant une relation de similitude avec l'oeuvre qui la contient". Le Récit spéculaire p.16.
27. Ibid p.207.
28. Ricardou Nouveaux problèmes du roman p.237.

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29. This comparison was first made by Ricardou with reference to La bataille de Pharsale in leur une théorie du nouveau roman Paris (Seuil) 1971, p.154:

Juissenc un parcours et sa boucle y conduit d'une face  
à l'opposée, appelons anneau de Loebius l'itinéraire  
qui mène en un lieu où se conjuguent le répétitif et  
l'inverse.

30. The butterfly is often used as an image of fictional generation in Simon's work. In Triptyque, there is a reference to a butterfly at the first instance of each of the narrative sequences. In Les Cornes conducteurs, as we saw in Part III chapter two, the motion of the butterfly emerging out of the photograph (p.109) reflects the structure of frame transgression underlying the whole novel. A similar reference can be found in the description of Alstir's painting in Proust's A la recherche du temps perdu. The butterfly-like sails hovering on the horizon-line separating sky from sea can be interpreted as an image of metaphorical writing which switches from one context to the next:

D'autres lois se dégageaient de cette même  
toile comme, au pied des immenses falaises,  
la grâce lilliputienne des voiles blanches  
sur le miroir bleu et elles semblaient des  
papillons endormis, et certains contrastes  
entre la profondeur des ombres et la pâleur  
de la lumière.

A la recherche II 431.

31. Infra p.200.  
32. Gérard Genette figures Paris (Seuil) 1966, pp.9-20.  
33. Infra pp.200-1.  
34. Marcel Proust op.cit. II 826.  
35. Ibid.  
36. Dällenbach's description of Robbe-Grillet's Projet pour une révolution à New York is equally applicable to Triptyque:

On a affaire ici à une version de l'anneau de  
Loebius ou du serpent Ouroboros: se tortant et  
se distordant sans trêve pour enfermer le texte  
dans ses virs-voltes et rendre indéfiniment  
permutables miter ou suture et récit, contenu et  
contenant, intérieur et extérieur, le Projet  
surchérise ces structures réversibles et évoque  
plutôt, par sa topologie paradoxale, la récurrence  
des circuits réflexifs imaginés par G. Binkoff,  
extrapolés à partir de la célèbre "bouteille" des  
"serpents" de Klein qui s'avalaient et se recrachent



Notes to Part IV Chapter Two.

la revue de toutes les figures.

Le récit spéculaire p.192.

One can add to this list of comparisons the drawings and engravings of M.C.Escher.

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Notes to Part IV Chapter Three.

1. François Jost, 'Les Aventures du lecteur', Loctione, no. 29, (february 1977), p.78.
2. Ricardou understandably accuses Jost of unfairly reducing his critical work to the chapter on the associations of "jaune" in La Bataille de Pharsale in Pour une théorie du nouveau roman. See Robbe-Grillet: analyse, théorie 2 vols Paris (U.G.E.) 1976, II 223-273.  
"Structural analysis" which Jost opposes to "generative analysis" forms the backbone of Ricardou's methodology as well as his own.
3. Jost, art.cit. p.83.
4. Ibid p.78.
5. Similar play between these two words can be found in Trinitique pp.7-9. See infra p.200.
6. Jost, art.cit. p.85.
7. Ibid p.79.
8. Ibid.
9. Claude Simon, 'Un homme traversé par le travail', la Nouvelle Critique, no.105, (June-July 1977), p.35.
10. We have already seen the intertextual association between La Route des Flandres and La Bataille de Pharsale which centres on "chaude affaire". See infra p.98.
11. André Rousseaux "L'Impressionisme de Claude Simon" in Littérature du vingtième siècle Paris (Albin Michel) 1961, p.176.
12. Tom Bishop "L'image de la création chez Claude Simon" in Nouveau roman: hier, aujourd'hui 2 vols Paris (U.G.E.) 1972, p.63.
13. Maria Elisabeth Kronogger Literary Impressionism New Haven (College and University Press) 1973, p.76.
14. Claude Simon "Réponses de Claude Simon à quelques questions écrites de Ludovic Jarvier" in Entretiens Montpellier (Editions Subervie) 1972, p.26.
15. A synonym for one of the meanings of "boudin" is "bourrelet".
16. "Boudin", as in "s'en aller en eau de boudin", means "to fizzle out".
17. Gustave Flaubert Oeuvres Complètes 2 vols Paris (Seuil) 1964, I 641.
18. Ibid p.628
19. Ibid p.630.

Notes to Part IV Chapter Three.

20. Ibid p.619.
  21. Ibid p.628.
  22. Ibid p.575.
  23. Ibid p.637. The same motif is repeated in the description of Piret's obelisk (p.677) which resembles the description of Charles's hat.
  24. Jost, art. cit. p.78.
  25. Ibid p.84.
  26. Ibid p.84.
  27. A link is created between the cigar box description and the man in sequence A by virtue of the fact that the latter beats his leg with a newspaper "comme un cavalier de sa bédaine" (p.29) while one of the sides of the cigar box is decorated with a picture of a "cavalier" (p.33)
  28. Il se détache de la barrière et s'avance vers elle, noir dans le noir, précédé de la tache rouge du cigare qui semble suspendue dans la nuit. (p.52).
  29. Jost, art.cit. p.84.
  30. Several elements in sequence A2 are originally "based" in sequence B, such as the bird cry and cow (p.19) and the frog (p.29).
  31. The cigar box description is a "mise en abyme" in that, as we shall see, it mirrors several elements which are scattered throughout the novel.
  32. Claude Simon, 'Un homme traversé par le travail', p.36.
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Notes to Conclusion:

1. Infra p.169.
  2. Jean Ricardou, 'Un Tour d'écrou textuel', Magazine Littéraire, no.74, (March 1973), p.33.
  3. Salvador Dali Les Cocus du vieil art moderne Paris (Fasquelle) 1956, p.95.
  4. Claude Simon, 'Le Poids des mots', Le Figaro Littéraire, no.1559, (3 April 1976), p.13.
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